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It is our policy that contributions are not only original but also advanced in the respective disciplines. Contributions that receive positive assessment from our team of assessors are published in the Journal.

Prof. Benjamin Omolayo
Editor

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UNDERSTANDING ETHNICITY AND IDENTITY THROUGH ETHNOGRAPHIC DETAILS REPOSIT IN DRAMA AND THEATRE, A REVIEW OF FOUR AFRICAN PLAYS

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Abstract

*Right from the inception, drama and theatre have not only been used as instruments of preservation of culture and tradition, they have been most effectively utilized to interrogate, instruct, educate and conscientise. As human artistic devices, they have been used as tools of investigating the imperfections in the society with a view to encourage and reinforce change for the better. Through textual analysis, this paper examines how drama and theatre have been appropriated as sign posts for ethnographic understanding of people's culture, ideology and social values. Among plays briefly examined are: J M Synge's *Riders to the Sea*, Osita Ezenwanebe's *Shadows on Arrival*, Efua Sutherland's *Edufaand* Athol Fugard's *Sizwe Bansi is Dead*. The paper reveals that drama and theatre can be deployed as part of the on-going project of addressing the politics of identity and representation in the contemporary situation of cultural and material inequalities that have been the subject of globalization.*

Keywords: *Ethnicity, Identity, Apartheid, Oppression and Globalization*

Introduction

The concept of ethnicity and identity are germane to sociologists and anthropologists and they have been used, especially, to discuss various problems pertaining to different social groups. However, these concepts connote different things, and several meanings have been offered on them by scholars and researchers in the field of ethnographic study. In this paper, we shall examine ethnicity and identity in theatre with the aims of exploring theatre as a tool for ethnographic understanding of a people's culture and their social aesthetics. It shall also interrogate how ethnicity and identity can be explored as postcolonial strategies of deconstructing apartheid and colonial domination.

Theatre from time immemorial has not only been used as an instrument of preservation of culture and tradition. It has been effectively deployed to instruct, educate and galvanize people to take certain actions that could engender their social development.

Theatre is used to embrace aspects such as creating political awareness, social mobilization, promotion and dissemination of desirable knowledge that human society benefits from in many ways. This indicates that theatre functions effectively to solve certain social, political, economic and historical challenges or problems that emerge within a specific society. Whetmore asserts that theatre “provides us with a giant mirror, a reflection of the values, the half-truths and the ideas of society (204)”. The art of the theatre has been with human being and it continues to perform positive roles of conscientising the people. And because of this, it is artistically designed to show the society its current position and the line of action to take in changing for the better. It is the understanding of the above notion that makes Hoggart proclaim that “without literary witness, a student of society would be blind to the fullness of that society (8)”. There are theatre scholars and critics that have approved of Hoggart's assertion as valid. For instance, Bamidele asserts that “from the plays of Aristophanes to the novels of Charles Dickens, from the Balzac and Tolstoy to the plays of Ben Jonson and Wole Soyinka, literary forms have become not just mere criticism but they reveal a lot about the various social institutions of their nations and society and people(5)”. This assertion shows clearly that works of art, especially theatre, can be used as a way of attaining ethnographic understanding of a particular ethnic group. Theatre could be explored as representational texts for investigation of any social matter, issues and challenges.

ETHNICITY AND IDENTITY IN THEATRE

The examination of the etymological origin of the constructs, *ethnicity* and *identity*, will provide a good understanding to the relevance of drama/theatre on why and how they engage socio-cultural comprehension. From their Greek and Latin origins—‘*ethnikus*’ and *ethnikas*, both respectively mean nations while ‘*identitas*’, derived from ‘*idem*’, means ‘same’. This gives relevance to Simpson and Weiner’s assertion that they mean “the sameness of a person or thing at all times in all circumstances, the condition or fact that a person or thing is itself and not something else(260).” Thomson describes an ethnic group as a “community of people who have the conviction that they had a common identity and a common fate based on issues of origin, kinship ties, tradition, cultural uniqueness, a shared history and possibly a shared language(12)”. The above conceptualization finds connection with Tolani’s opinion that ethnicity is “a highly inclusive and relatively large scale group identity based on the same notion of common origin, recruited primarily from kinship and typically manifesting some measure of cultural distinctiveness(20)”. It links up with Hoggart Abram’s idea of identity as a “people’s concept of who they are, of what sort of people they are, and how they relate to others (2)”. Combining these illuminating thoughts, one can safely opine that ethnicity and identity could mean, even at minimum implication, the sameness of a group of people sharing common identifiable customs, traditions, historical experience and in some instance geographical residence; an

understanding of which helps in the conceptualization of their ethno-cultural formation and development, as a people within a wider world.

The essential place of drama in engaging the concept of ethnicity and identity is established by the fact of their historical origin and development over the centuries, which in every sense is connected to the socio-cultural, political as well as economic and aesthetic evolution, influenced and controlled by the reality of the people's experience. From Classical Greece to contemporary times, dramatists have drawn 'montage-like' pictures of their world, in concrete terms. Whether we consider dominant cultures such as the West or dominated cultures such as Australia, India, Africa and the rest of the Third world, we find a great deal of disparate texts, movements and emergent modes. What ties all these together into, even if not a coherent whole through a cultural formation, is the way they all employ ethnic narratives as their primary method of expression, by embedding these cultural patterns into well-known, pre-defined narratives which help to make sense of their life and artistic experiences. Soyinka lends credence to this assertion when he writes that "the search, even by European dramatists for ritualize roots from which to draw out visions of modern experience, is a clue to the deep-seated need of creative humans to recover the archetypal consciousness in the origins of the dramatic medium(42-3)". It is against this background that selected drama texts will be studied in relation to understanding their ethnic backgrounds, which serve as channel for the comprehension of happenings in other societies outside our immediate environment.

Theatre as Instrument for Ethnographic understanding

Research has shown that drama of all the genres of literature has the power to be employed by ethnographers in data collection of a particular ethnic group. Ethnography simply refers to "a portrait of a people", written description of a people's culture, customs, beliefs and behaviour based on information collected through fieldwork. Fetterman describes ethnography as the "art and science of describing a research culture" (1). Ethnography is a form of qualitative research that includes descriptions of people, places, language, events and products. And as a means of research, it has long been employed in the performing arts and thus have been conceptualized as performance ethnography or ethno- performance which indicates the process in which a playwright through his or her plays reveals some cultural and political information, both material and non-material items of a set of people identified within a geographical space. Bamidele succinctly gives an appropriate conceptualization of the term 'performing ethnography' when he opines that:

Performing ethnography could therefore be defined as the effort of the dramatist to present to us a play as an interface between the social and the aesthetic, in this case, there are explicit and implicit symbolic objects in a play that can help us analyze a society in locating the links between kinship, economic, legal, ritual, political structure and aesthetic and other socio-cultural systems. (57)

The implication of the above assertion is that through the reading of a drama text or watching its performance, the audience could learn more about the socio-cultural systems of a society. These could be in the areas of customs, political and economic administration, ritual observance, ballads, proverbs, art and craft “and all such aspects of cultural outfit that are typical of a society or group” (57). From the reading of a drama text or taking part in the theatre performance of a particular ethnic group, the reader or the performer and the audience may draw a “montage-like picture” and understanding of the cultural space of that ethnic group. This paper however, through textual analysis, interrogates how drama is engaged in exploring ethnographic understanding. For this purpose, the following plays will be studied: J. M. Synge’s *Riders to the Sea*, Efua Sutherland’s *Edufa*, Osita Ezenwanebe’s *Shadows on Arrivaland* Athol Fugard’s *Sizwe Bansi is Dead*.

J.M. Synge’s *Riders to the Sea*

J.M. Synge’s *Riders to the sea*, through an ethnographic reading is a play that reflects the Irish ethnic background and identity. The play explores experiences and lifestyles of the Aran people of Ireland, and showcase the conflict between human beings and nature through the story of a peasant woman and her struggle against the sea. Bamidele sees the play as a “fictional tragedy which has a theme and structure that is filled with the premonition of catastrophe with a view to depicting the portrait of the Irish through their folk belief” (59). Most of Synge’s plays are centered on ethnicity and cultural identity, and are meant to develop the Irish culture and identity by reviewing the indigenous language, Gaelic, restudying their national history, exploring the rich background of myth, legend and endeavoring to assert Irish cultural identity from the enclave of the British colonial masters. Tracing the antecedent of the quest for cultural assertion in which most Irish literary writers are known for. Mey-yen Chen affirms that:

After a long period of English colonial rule, Ireland lost its cultural identity. When the independence movement sprang up in the second half of the 19th century, Ireland failed to get rid of the British Empire’s political oppression but the Irish writers turned to their own cultural heritage in order to bring about a rebirth of their own (1).

Hence, because of the British imperialism, these writers like W.B Yeats, Lady Gregory, Brendan Kanelly, Tom Paulin and Aidan Carl Mathew and Synge, started the Irish literary renaissance in order to project the Irish national identity through their mysticism, mythology, folklore, culture, history as well as peasant life which is quite unique and typical of Irish people. The aim of this is to reflect Irish ethnic background and identity as different from that of the English. Synge wrote six plays of which three could be successfully studied from the ethnographic perspective. These are *Riders to the Sea*,

Playboy of the Western World and *The Shadow of the Glen*. All the plays explore the experience and lifestyle of the Aran people of Ireland.

Riders to the Sea is a one-act tragedy that draws on the Irish subject matter in portraying the tragedy of an Aran woman, Maurya who loses her husband and five sons to the sea. Paradoxically, the sea that serves as the source of living for the people also serves as the trap of death. The plot is woven around Maurya, the old peasant woman who has already lost nine members of her family including five of her sons to the sea. The fifth whom she had just lost is Michael and as the family awaits the body to be washed ashore from the sea, Maurya is in a mournful mood. The only surviving son, Bartley procures white board for his brother's coffin and a piece of new rope for tying up the body. Maurya's two daughters Nora, and Cathleen talk in low voice so that their mother would not hear what they discuss. Nora had just arrived from the shore with a bundle of shirt and stockings found on a dead man washed ashore; the cloth belongs to Michael, a confirmation that Michael is dead.

Meanwhile, Bartley, the last son, had earlier informed Maurya that he wants to go to Galway fair to sell horse and frantically Maurya dissuades him from going because the sea at that time is bad. She also sees the moon with a star close by and this foretells a bad omen of death. She had earlier seen a horrible vision which foretells the death of Michael and Bartley and because of this, she warns Bartley her surviving son not to go to the sea. Bartley refuses to listen to his mother's advice and proceeds on the journey, but his body is later carried home as he dies while trying to cross the sea. In the end, all the male children of Maurya including her husband die in the same sea that gives them their livelihood. The play describes the conflict between human beings and nature through the story of a peasant woman and her struggle against the sea. The central incident of the play and the motifs used are drawn from the playwright's experience on the Island.

Therefore, a close study of the text in reading and in performance could form a knowledge base for the audience in the understanding of the cultural norms and beliefs of the Irish and their disposition to life. Apart from the thematic concern of the play, an ethno-dramatic excursion of it reveals the following cultural beliefs of the people of Aran in Island.

Firstly, it is considered a premonition of death when there is a star up against the moon. For instance, when Bartley informs Maurya that he wants to sail to Galway for the fair, Maurya warns him not to go because of the sign she had seen.

Maurya: If it is not found itself, what wind is raising the sea, and there was a star up again the moon, and it rising in the night. If it were a hundred horses, or a thousand horses you had it, what is the pride of a thousand horses against a son, where there is one son only (88).

The implication of this is that among the Aran Islanders of Ireland for the star to appear side by side with moon foretells a premonition. And nobody should go to the sea at this period. Bartley refuses to listen to Maurya thereby loses his life.

Secondly, it is considered harmful among the people not to complement one another by the word "God bless you". This is seen when Bartley makes up his mind to go to Galway, he wishes Maurya the blessing of God but does not reply with God bless you. This annoys Cathleen and rebukes her that:

Cathleen: Why wouldn't you give him your blessing and he looking round in the door? Isn't it sorrow enough is on everyone in this house without your sending him out with an unlucky word behind him, and a hard word in his ear? (90)

From the above analysis, it is clear that play can therefore be seen as a deliberate attempt by the playwright to divest his audience of the folk life of the people of Aran in Ireland.

Efua Sutherland's *Edufa*

Efua Sutherland was a Ghanaian female playwright who established the experimental theatre company, Ghana Society of Writers and Ghana Drama Studio in the 1960s. The studio later became part of the University of Ghana Centre for African Studies. As a direct outcome of her effort for children in Ghana, the government established the Ghana National Commission for Children. Sutherland has published extensively in the genre of drama which include *Foriwa* (1962), *Edufa* (1967) a Ghanaian adaptation of Euripides *Alcestis*, *The Marriage of Anansewa*, a creative satiric comment on the early post independence Ghana. Although she studied widely in and outside of Africa, Sutherland's drama seeks an audience among children and adults, both literate and illiterate. Trained in the folklore of the Akan people of Ghana, she acknowledged the oral roots of her art in her choice of drama as her medium of expression.

Edufa seeks to point out the parallels between the world views of the ancient Greece and contemporary Ghanaian society. The play centres on the protagonist, Edufa, who seeks to escape death by asking the oracle to extend his life by giving him more years. However, a bitter pill is given to him to swallow, that is, to accept the oath of death that has been predicted for him by the oracle. Edufa, being a wealthy and educated Ghanaian notices that he is gradually getting to the end of his life pleads with the priest for an elongation. He is told by the oracle that he must look for somebody who would replace his life for his. Unfortunately for him, he finds it difficult to get somebody who could do that. His father cannot sacrifice himself for his son but his wife, Ampoma does. This tragic decision which is made unconsciously by his wife leads to her sickness and eventually to her death and the

secret behind this is eventually discovered by the family and the people around him. Edufa's overblown image is dented and he loses his sanity towards the end of the play.

A study of the play in reading and performance could reveal the following ethnographic issues about the Akan people of Ghana.

- Folk medicine is practiced and it is of high esteem among the Akan people.
- The relevance of omens and supernaturalism in the life of the people as portrayed in the consultation with the diviner.
- The belief in burial rites and the sharing of dead relation's burden and properties.
- The consequence of disrespect for elders
- There is also the use of proverbs and wise sayings that embody the world view of the people
- The belief of the people in signs and symbols as they could suggest meanings that have cultural and spiritual undertones. For instance, the throwing of the three pebbles the diviner gives to Sam to deliver to Edufa, connotes a spiritual meaning of death for Edufa.

Osita Ezenwanebe's *Shadows on Arrival*

Osita Ezenwanebe's *Shadows on Arrival* is an epitome of a traditional African drama and theatre that reflects not only the traditional cultural state of the Nigerian Igbo society, but also indicates narrowly, the western influence on the traditional African society. Though, the core idea of the playwright is not to depict cultural clash or conflict, rather to showcase the strength of traditional African womanhood. In her author's note, Ezenwanebe comments that:

Shadows on Arrival is not about conflict of culture or religion. No satire on either side is intended or dramatized. The play is primarily about the strength of traditional African womanhood. I have been contemplating on how to recreate an unbiased image of traditional African women, specifically, Igbo women in Nigeria. (1)

Instead of exploring the clash in culture which has become 'a stock in trade for some critics', the central conflict in *Shadows on Arrival* is Egoyibo's unwavering, dogged and fearless struggle with the powerful triad: Agwudo (her husband), the Igwe and his cabinet, and Ezemuo (the chief priest).

By remaining resilient in her tenderness, focused in caring, critical in obedience, instrumental in subservience and unwavering in her conviction, she is able not only to save her daughter but also make Ezemuo suffer the consequences of exploiting his privileged spiritual position, lying against the

gods and misleading the people, threatening the cord of trust that bind the universe of African world. (1)

This depicts that the Africa traditional woman has her own peculiar ways of tackling challenges, without being necessarily rude or violent in her approach, but through wisdom and being resolute, certain ills could be corrected, that would be beneficial not only to her, but also to the society and humanity at large. Through the identity of Umueze community, Ezenwanebe creates what Ladele considers as a “traditional society that has a strong sense of cosmic harmony which thrives through ritual placations of gods, spirit and ancestors to maintain and sustain hegemony” (42). From this it is clear that the play interrogates the igbo cultural identity and values being eroded by the combination of materialism, greed, Western faith represented by Christianity and machination of symbols, which represent cultural pillars of the traditional world.

In the play Umueze is a community that holds strongly to its beliefs and traditional practices and in which the people adhere to the doctrines and messages of gods and goddesses. Ezemuo, the chief priest of Idemili and the spiritual leader of the community announces that Egoyibo and Agwudo’s daughter, Agbonma, has been chosen by the gods to be the next priestess of Agbala-Oha, the earth goddess. Because of the spiritual position of Ezemuo, the people believe whatever he says and they also hold such in high esteem. Due to this, no one is ready to question the words of the gods but Egoyibo who is directly affected has to because Agbonma is her one and only daughter, even then, she has to peacefully protest. Everyone, especially the men, agree to the pronouncement of Ezemuo, including Agwudo who is the father of Agbonma. But Egoyibo through what Ezenwanebe describes as “resilience in her tenderness, assertive in her submissiveness” is able to rise against the injustices to be meted on her and Agbonma through patriarchal structure of Umueze.

Egoyibo is critical of the decision of the gods as she begins to understand the contradictory nature of Ezemuo and the Igwe in council. When her husband informs her of the message of Ezemuo, she rejects it by asking the salient question that unravels the conflict of the play:

Message of the gods how? If the message is from Agbala Oha, the earth goddess, why did Chieme, her priestess, not bring it herself? Why did Agbala-Oha’s choice go through the chief priest of Idemili and who now summoned a meeting of the titled men and then sent ndi ichie to bring the news to us.(20)

She begins to think that the same Ezemuo who redeemed her daughter from the spell of Ogbanje spirit and who promised that Agbonma would live long is now the same man who pronounced a life of perpetual solitude in the forest as the priestess of Agbala-Oha for her. Agbonma is a modern girl with lofty vision of acquiring Western education. With the above questions, Egoyibo knows instantly that there is a foul play being executed by

Ezemuo. He had at one time made amorous advances towards Egoyibo after seeing her nakedness while bathing in the shrine of Agbala-Oha. Egoyibo refuses Ezemuo's sexual request. Thus, she alerts her husband, who is too weak to believe and is ready to accept his fate. Egoyibo questions the authority of Ezemuo to deliver the message of Agbala-Oha. It should have been Chieme, the priestess. She asks: Is Ezemuo now the priestess of Agbala-Oha? (20).

She tries to enlighten her husband that this could be a ploy by Ezemuo to avenge her not surrendering to his request to flirt with her. Instead of the husband to stand by his wife and reject the pronouncement of Ezemuo on their daughter, he keeps silent and accepts it as his fate. In fact, it is glaring that Egoyibo understands that Ezemuo is a mischievous priest who has been perpetuating evil acts by receiving gratification from the messengers of the white men through his sacred office as the chief priest.

Egoyibo: I knew it would come to this. The moment I began to see the messengers of the white men sneak into the sacred ground of Idemili with heavily loaded bags, I knew that the wind from the groove may no longer be as clean as before. (20)

In the end, Ezemuo is disgraced as he dies through the thunder of Agbala-Oha. The ploy of Ezemuo is to use his position as the chief priest of the land to oppress and subjugate Egoyibo into silence by making sure that her only daughter is permanently in the shrine of Agbala-Oha as a priestess, a role that is not fit for a young ambitious lady like Agbonma

From the ethnographic perspective, *Shadows on Arrival* showcases Igbo traditional culture as it operates in countering gender based issues like female oppression and victimization of women and girls in conflict and lack of women in decision-making positions. The language of the play clearly establishes the social milieu of the Igbo traditional society of Africa with all its mores, values and sacred tradition which held the people together. Among ethnographic indices in the play are:

- * the creative use of proverb which constitutes an essential part of the play by helping to propel forward the plot structure.
- * the political system of the Igbo community, exemplified by Umueze (where the Igwe presides over titled men in council) and this is wellrecreated.
- * the Igbo religious belief system (where the Chief Priest alongside other priests of other gods) preside over the religious affairs of the Igbo people) which is recreated.
- * the social system, including family life, norms, parental duties with its hierarchical system that are recreated.

Other ethnographic details affording further understanding of the Igbo ethnic background of the period being depicted is the perspective of the characters in the play on the new religion, Christianity, and the white men who have come to establish this religion alongside colonialism.

Due to all this, one could note that the play is laden as a very powerful cultural tool that people outside of the Igbo culture can learn values and norms of the ethnic people from. The play thus goes beyond being an entertainment tool alone, but the ethnographic tool of informing, educating and conscientising the audience on Igbo socio-cultural ways of life. One could argue that the playwright intentionally uses the play to address a global issue (gender) through the microcosm of the Igbo world view; however another critical reading of the play reveals that it exposes the traditional life of the Igbo. In its apt posture, one could see the play from another perspective of revealing how Igbo traditional culture is used to advance the participation of women as equal partners with men in achieving sustainable development, peace and respect for human right.

Athol Fugard's *Sizwe Bansi is Dead*

We shall start this aspect of the paper on Dennis Walder's assertion that "all writing is one or the other ethnocentric: a writer is brought up in the tradition of a particular group or culture with all its codes, taboos and values(10)". This assertion is germane to the discourse on Athol Fugard, who is a white playwright, brought up in South Africa and written plays that centre on the country's predicament and racial prejudice. In fact, many literary critics like Wertheim have criticized him that he is a white playwright whose white skin and Eurocentric education prevented him from knowing the South African black majority and their problem in a truly intimate and therefore meaningful way. What this suggests is that Athol Fugard, because of his white skin is not capable of depicting the true experience of the blacks in South Africa. This, to us, is a fallacy. There is the fact that his mother is an Afrikaner and he lived with when he was growing up. He also experienced life with the apartheid society and this has qualified him as a playwright that can truly give accounts of the traumatic experiences of the black South Africans. He has been described by Preece as a writer who sees "himself as a regional writer who cannot exist and continue his craft independent of his home (30)".

As a renowned South African player, Fugard has written plays basically to expose and challenge the dehumanizing nature of the apartheid system; among them are *Hello and Goodbye* (1965), *Boesman and Lena* (1969), *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* (1972), *The Island* (1972) and many more. *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* which is the focus of this paper is written as an expose of the tragic experiences of blacks in South Africa during the system of apartheid rule.

The play can be described as a counter discursive response to the criminal enterprise of the apartheid rule and by extension colonial domination and its deeply entrenched effects on the colonized subjects. A critical study of the apartheid system shows that its mission was to stratify the people based on racial lines and consequently subordinate them (blacks) physically and psychologically. As a young boy living with his mother, Fugard witnesses the plight of the oppressed blacks, this prompts most of his plays, according to Gray, to

“have always been politically conscious and always assault the legal statutes that maintained the apartheid states (26).”

The play interrogates and articulates the strategies the black people in apartheid South Africa devised, in surviving the dehumanizing laws that relegates them to the level of nothingness. It also reflects on the hegemonic structures of the apartheid rule and the response of the colonized subjects toward subverting it.

The play in its entirety is an actual question of identity and self recovery in the catastrophic space of displacement and dislocation that characterized the experiences of the blacks during this period. At the beginning of the play, Style, a self-made photographer, talks to the audience through the headline of a newspaper. From the monologue, the audience is informed about Style’s previous job as a factory worker at Ford Motors and how black factory workers are treated in term of working conditions that have no retirement benefit except a gold wristwatch. He reflects on the painful reality that he will have nothing to show for his six years at the company, hence, he resigns to start a job of his dream.

He gets a studio besides a funeral parlor which later becomes” a strong room of dreams“of his fellow blacks in the country. Different levels of black people come to Styles studio to take photograph, among them is Robert Zwelinzima, who later through flashback, the audience are aware of his true identity. His real name is Sizwe Bansi who leaves King Williams Town for Port Elizabeth in search of job, but due to the fact that he has no work permit, he could not get job. The apartheid system makes it difficult for any black man who does not possess a work permit to work. At the end, Sizwe is advised by Buntu, another black fellow, who from him, the audience is able to understand the terrible realities of the apartheid system, to adopt the name of a dead blackman in the name of Robert Zwelinzima, who owns a work permit before death. Sizwe takes to Buntu’s advice and goes to Style’s studio for photographs he could send home to his wife Nowetu and through letter, informs her of his new identity.

ETHNO-IDENTITY FEATURES IN *SIZWE BANSI IS DEAD*

For the exploration of the ethno-identity features in *Sizwe Bansi is Dead*, this paper takes a look at how Fugard engages in the use of symbols at revealing the peculiar challenges faced by the blacks during the apartheid system. These challenges can therefore be seen as symbols of identity for the blacks during the dehumanizing system in South Africa. Fugard himself had commented during an interview with Mary Benson in 1977 that “the sense I have of myself is that of a regional writer with the theme, textures, actsof celebration, of defiance and outrage that go with the South African experience. These are the only things I have been able to write about (4)”.

This statement shows that the playwright’s major concern is in the revealing of the experiences of the South Africans, especially the blacks in his various theatrical performances. Hence, the playwright appropriates symbols in showing the identities of the

blacks in apartheid South Africa. Through the use of symbol, Fugard reveals the harms done to blacks in the pursuit of survival in the minority white dominated political space.

He is like a griot who narrates the ugly experiences of the blacks in the face of the obnoxious apartheid rule. The fact that the entire events take place in a studio attests to the fact that the studio symbolizes a “house of dream”, a space for the blacks to tentatively achieve their dreams and aspirations and as they pose the way they want for pictures because they don’t know what the outside world hold for them. The photographs are representation of memory as Edward Said has commented that they are “a powerful collective instrument of preserving identity. It is one of the bulwarks against historical erasure, a means of resistance (182)”.

Style is used by the playwright to interrogate capitalist exploitation practices of the whites and through his dramatic monologue, he reveals to the audience (Non-South African) that apartheid South Africa constructs and represents blacks as the “other”. His photographic studio is adjacent to a funeral parlour which also symbolizes the idea that happiness and sadness are placed side by side in human experience; the studio symbolizes a place of happiness while the funeral parlour symbolizes a place of sadness.

His camera symbolizes the instrument of memory that enables the blacks to immortalize their moments of happiness. Through the camera, the people smile even when they are sad. For instance, Sizwe Bansi takes the picture smiling so that his wife, Nowetu would believe that everything is normal. And to temporarily forget his suffering because he is in the “house of dream”, he imagined in his posture to be ‘chief Messenger of Fletex, sitting in his office with the world behind him (167)’. His adoption of the name Robert Zwelinzima is used as symbol of blackman’s quest for survival under the apartheid system. For him to get a job, survive and feed his family back home, he has to adopt the name of a dead man.

A close reading of the title reflects the symbolism in it. Adopting Robert Zwelinzima indicates that everything about Sizwe and his family is dead. He needs to inform his wife back home of the sudden change in name, but how? He subtly does through the letter he writes to Nowetu that “as a matter of fact Sizwe Bansi is dead. As it is known, this is not a physical death but a metaphorical one by which the wife needs to agree with for the entire family to survive. It is clear that through adopting the use of symbol, the playwright reveals to the audience how the blacks appropriate various ways to live during the apartheid system including faking identity and documents like in the case of Sizwe Bansi and the establishment of small business like Style who owns a photographic studio. This indicates the blacks are able to achieve this through their survival strategies.

CONCLUSION

In drawing our conclusion, it is important to emphasize that drama text or drama performance can assist the audience and ethnographers in the understanding of particular

ethnic groups and its identity. This understanding could be in the areas of culture, socio-economic and political issues. This approach is referred to as performance ethnography. It helps in the expressing and understanding of the ethnicity and identity of a particular group that is placed before the audience. It is through this approach that the worldview, philosophy ideology and identity of the group can be understood better.

From another perspective, ethnicity and identity can be constructed by creative writers' especially postcolonial female dramatists to subvert colonial and patriarchal hegemony. Through this, the playwrights focus and project a particular ethnic group, highlighting the uniqueness, importance and positive aspects to counter the assumption that European culture is the best. Through the plays examined as micro-study, it is clear that the playwrights appropriated drama to explore a redefinition of the identity of the characters in the plays.

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