

Representing Africa in the Motherland and the Diaspora

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*Essays on Theatre, Dance,
Music and Cinema*

Edited by

Kevin J. Wetmore, Jr.

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This volume is dedicated to the scholars who lead
the African Theatre Association, who lift and inspire the rest of us,
in particular Professors Sam Kasule, Sola Adeyemi, Kene Igweonu,
and Osita Okagbue.

Awon ore mi ati awon akowe, mo dupe lowo nyin.

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REPRESENTING AFRICA: AN INTRODUCTION

KEVIN J. WETMORE, JR.

“Representing Africa” is a problematic phrase at best, raising a number of questions. Who is doing the representing and to whom? Where, how, and in what context? Which “Africa”? “Africa” is fifty-four countries, hundreds of cultures, but is also the diaspora of African cultures spread over the globe historically and contemporarily - an Africa of the imagination, both in the past and the present. “Representing Africa” consists of infinite representations to infinite audiences, diachronically.

The diaspora presents further challenges in representing Africa both within and especially without Africa. Too often in the West, even with African artists doing the representing, what is represented is always in response to the West. Chukwuma Okoye observes in his “Postcolonial African Theatre: Notes Toward a Definition” that: “It seems that African ‘postcoloniality’ is happening anywhere but Africa” and that there is more “postcolonial” African drama presented in London at the Royal Court and the Young Vic and in Leeds at the West Yorkshire Playhouse than in all of Nigeria (2010, 28). African theatre, dance and cinema by, for, and about Africans in Africa represents much differently in terms of content, approach, and even style and form than those same media outside of Africa. Scholars both in the Motherland and around the world must grapple with the many issues in how Africa is represented through performance culture and popular media. After all, film, dance and drama do not just mean, they generate meaning based upon context, audience, location, and even moment in history, both global and personal.

This volume considers the different discourses on and in Africa as represented in theatre, dance, music and cinema and the complexities of those representations. Many of the essays engage representing Africa within Africa, which already leads to levels of representation within the same project. A Nollywood video film represents Africa to itself (Nigeria representing to Nigeria), but also to the rest of the continent (Nigeria representing to South Africa), and to the world (Nigeria to the United

Kingdom, for example), and each of those representations functions differently within its own context. A work of art does not mean, it generates meaning based on artist, audience and context.

Even within Africa, meanings and representations are changed as borders are crossed. In many cases, the artists are very well aware of the potential for international encounters and gage their work differently than for the local audiences. As Bennetta Jules-Rosette observes, image creators and image consumers both play a role in the meaning of that art: "Tourist Art" is "a process of communication involving image creators who attempt to represent aspects of their own cultures to meet the expectations of image consumers" (1984, 1). In other words, the representation is not necessarily an accurate one, but one shaped by the artists' perception of the audience's expectations as much as by the source culture itself.

Writing as a citizen of the United States and a teacher of African theatre in Los Angeles, I am always aware of how Western popular culture has shaped my own students' perception of "Africa." Representations of "Africa" from without has informed what they think of (and what they think they know of) Africa. *Tears of the Sun* (2003, dir. Antione Fuqua), *Hotel Rwanda* (2004, dir. Terry George), *The Constant Gardener* (2005, dir. Fernando Meirelles), *Blood Diamond* (2006, dir. Edward Zwick), and *The Last King of Scotland* (2006, dir. Kevin Macdonald), for example, shape their view of Africa. Also, their perception of Africa has been shaped since childhood through *The Lion King* (1994, dirs. Roger Allers and Rob Minkoff) and the many variations of Edgar Rice Burroughs's Tarzan, most notably Disney's animated *Tarzan* (1999, dirs. Chris Buck and Kevin Lima) and more recently *The Legend of Tarzan* (2016, dir. David Yates). All of these narratives are American or European-created and derived, virtually all of them focus on non-Africans in Africa, and all of them construct highly problematic representations of Africa: either it is a continent of nothing but political, social, medical, military and humanitarian disasters (that often require someone from outside Africa to intervene in order to protect Africans from themselves), or Africa is happy, singing animals.

Representing Africa within the diaspora, by African artists, by African-descended artists, by expatriates and others is also highly problematic and challenging. As Harry J. Elam, Jr. and Douglas A. Jones, Jr. write in their introduction to *The New Methuen Drama Book of Post-Black Plays*, "The question of how to imagine, summon, and construct a connection to an African past has been one that has captivated black Western artists, scholars, activists, and ordinary people since the landing of the first slave

ships in the New World. In the theatrical formations that African Americans have crafted, for instance, Africa has functioned as a romanticized site of origin as well as an aspirational vision of a liberated future. Accordingly, these representations have often said more about African-American politics and identities than they have about those of Africa” (2012, xxx-xxxi). Since the nineteen sixties especially, African-America has looked to the Motherland as a whole as a “nation of origin.” Even the designation “African-American” is a continental one. Whereas Euro-American identify by nation (Irish-American, German-American, Italian-American, etc.) the Diaspora posits an unknown geographic locality, so all of Africa becomes the homeland. All of Africa can thus provide identity for people in the Americas of African descent, which is why post-sixties, two of the most popular names for African-American boys were Kenyatta and Kwame, from Kenya and Ghana, respectively. Kwanzaa was invented in Los Angeles in 1966 by Maulana Ndabezitha Karenga (born Ronald McKinley Everett) as a pan-African, Black Nationalist movement. In one sense, Professor Karenga and others sought to create a Pan-African identity for people of African descent in the United States, and in another one might argue he was still imagining the Other, just now as himself.

Fast forward fifty years to the present and we face new and unique challenges to the representation of Africa around the globe. Globalization and technology, especially the internet, are not equalizers but instead further carriers of Western values and cultures. The Internet is present in Africa, especially urban areas, but the primary content of the net is still created by, for and about the West. While the African presence on the internet is growing and offering alternative representations, the West and the (false) binary of “The West and the rest” still dominate.

In exploring theatre and dance we also face challenges of medium and memory in analyzing the representation of Africa. The challenge of non-scripted events and paratheatrical activity, not to mention limited definitions of theatre and dance, mean that much of African performance is inaccessible to the west, or even to the rest of Africa. Scholars, especially western-based ones (including this author) often rely upon published texts, or, if fortunate, copies of the unpublished author’s texts. But the focus of study remains literary rather than performance. Yet, as Suzuki Tadashi reminds us, culture *is* the body. To see the dancers’ bodies move, to hear the drums, or to watch and listen to the interaction of actors, all in our presence makes all the difference in terms of representation, experience and ability to understand what one is encountering. Theatre is live; dance and music often also require that certain “liveness” for one to

truly experience both the art and the representation. Even cinema, out of context, creates a different representation. It is one thing to watch a Nollywood video film in Lagos, another to see it at the Los Angeles Film Festival.

Further problematizing study is the challenge of artificial divisions: theatre, performance, dance, music, and even cinema are studied, presented and perceived as different disciplines, even though many of the performances analyzed in this volume consist of more than one of these disciplines in a manner that cannot be deconstructed. The dance, the music, the drama must be performed together. The reader will also find the additional challenge of forms not found outside of Africa (and indeed, often limited to a specific nation or even geographic area). For example, Nigerian video-films are unlike anything anywhere else. They are similar to, but markedly different from, cinema, television, home video or webseries. Within video-films culture, there are a whole host of additional concerns, as some of the chapters here explore. Artists seek to create a uniquely Nigerian idiom, but remain concerned with western influence. The role of gender, both the people who are making the films and how it is represented on screen, is a site of a variety of concerns, sometimes contradictory. Women wish to be empowered; while others fear that the empowerment comes at a cost of objectification and sexualization within the narratives. African feminism faces similar *and* markedly different challenges than its counterparts in the United Kingdom and United States, for example.

The book is divided into three sections: theatre and performance, dance and music, and cinema. Femi Osofisan, in 1996 at the Second Annual African Studies Lecture at the Institute of African Studies at the University of Leeds, outlined the role of African writers:

“identification...with the cause of the lower classes, along with the overt desire to raise their consciousness, demystify the terrifying image of their oppressors, and empower the ordinary people themselves to play a more active role in the determination of their destiny.

...

Drama is, perhaps without surprise, the area where these goals are most explicit and perhaps best achieved. For, in the area of incorporating traditional oral forms, of building a direct bridge to the audience by addressing their immediate concerns, the theatre is of course advantaged, since it deals with performance. (2016, 160).

Osofisan, in other words, sees the role of theatre to be empowering, demystifying and to address the immediate needs of the local audience. In “Part One: Theatre and Performance,” the volume begins with three essays

concerning the representation of Africa through traditional literary drama. While numerous African-American plays had represented Africa in the years before the Second World War (I'm thinking especially of offerings such as *In Dahomey* and W.E.B. DuBois's *The Star of Ethiopia*, the former representing Africa for comic effect and the latter linking African-Americans to the greater history of Africa, which is presented as offering the most important contributions to the history of humanity), *A Raisin in the Sun* introduced audiences to Joseph Asagai, a proud Nigerian student improbably with an amaZulu name. Whereas Mama Younger first looks down upon Africans, telling her daughter they sleep in trees and need to be saved from "heathenism," while asking, "Why should I know anything about Africa?", Beneatha celebrates and embraces her African heritage, especially in the person of Joseph Asagai (1988, 57). Beneatha indeed complains about the representation of Africa in the United States: "All anyone seems to know about when it comes to Africa is Tarzan" (1988, 57), to my point, above. As I have argued elsewhere, however:

Asagai, however, is not merely a pure symbol of a pure Africa. Hansberry gives us a more complex character that is a bit of a Lothario with a reputation for having many girlfriends. He undergoes a change during the play, however, moving from a gift-giving, playful campus Casanova to a man who asks Beneatha to marry him and be a doctor in Africa. He makes it clear that although their struggles are similar on the surface, and perhaps even related, Nigeria's problems are very different from African America's, and the grass may be greener for each. (Wetmore 2009, 8).

Hansberry's play represents the beginning of a complex negotiation within African-America about its relationship to Africa and how both can and should be represented.

In "Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun*: The African-Diasporas Identity Search and Racism/Desegregation Dialectics," Joseph Agofure Idogho considers the African Diaspora in an age of migration and sees *A Raisin in the Sun* as a model for understanding Afrosporic identity. Idogho argues that scholars and artists have misinterpreted the central struggle of the play. Mama does not serve as impediment to Walter's manhood, rather Mama attempts to reorient Walter to an Africanist perspective. She wants him to understand the challenge that his commitment to capitalism represents, and that he must see himself as part of an unbroken tradition going back through his father back to Africa. Idogho also sees the play as a search for an African home, literalized in the desire to purchase a house in a more upscale neighborhood, recognizing the home is in a land that is new and possibly hostile, a rather potent metaphor for the migrant experience.

It should be noted that Hansberry's theatrical heirs continue to explore the relationship between Motherland and her children in the diaspora. In particular, writers such as Danai Gurira and Lynn Nottage return repeatedly to representing Africa in their respective plays. Danai Gurira and Nikkole Salter's *In the Continuum*, which developed out of their university thesis, presents two women, Nia and Abigail, the former a high school dropout in South Central Los Angeles and the latter a television news presenter in Harare, Zimbabwe, who both discover they are pregnant and HIV positive on the same day. The play parallels their experiences, often upending expectations about these two women while also demonstrating that a lower-class African-American woman and an upper-middle class Zimbabwean woman often have more in common because of their gender, rather than their respective classes. Interestingly, when Nia is told she is HIV positive she goes into deep denial and verbally attacks the clinic nurse: "Do it look like I'm gay? Do I look like I'm from Africa?" (2007, 19), thus demonstrating a further stereotype within the United States: that only gays and Africans get AIDS. Gurira and Salter construct a representation of Africa born of their own experiences (Gurira is Zimbabwean, although raised in the United States) that find commonalities amidst the differences, even though the play's heartbreaking ending contains false hope within denial for both women. Gurira has continued to write about African women, offering some of the more accurate representations of Africa by an American artist. *Eclipsed*, which premiered in 2009, set in Liberia in 2003, takes place among the captive wives of a Liberian rebel officer. Her 2011 play *The Convert* is an historical drama set in 1895 in the land that would become Zimbabwe. Jekesai, a Shona girl fleeing a forced marriage, converts to Christianity and is renamed Ester in order to find sanctuary in the home of an African Christian minister. The tension of the play comes from her attempts to reconcile her traditional beliefs with what the Christians now expect her to believe. Her most recent play, *Familiar*, set in Minnesota, features a Zimbabwean woman whose family arrives in the United States for her marriage to a Euro-American. While a comedy, the play treats its characters and subject matter seriously and with respect. It is yet another in a series of plays about cultural differences between Africa and Europe or America explored through the metaphor of a marriage (see: Ola Rotimi's *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again*, Ama Ata Aidoo's *Dilemma of a Ghost*, Mfoniso Udofia's *Sojourners*, and, as noted above, *A Raisin in the Sun*).

Similarly, multiple Pulitzer Prize-winner Lynn Nottage has set two of her plays in Africa. The first, *Mud, River, Stone* (1996), takes place in Mozambique. An African-American couple (indeed they proudly call

themselves “African-American” to the Africans until they realize they are more American than African) have come to visit the husband’s ancestral homeland, but end up being taken hostage in their hotel by a bellhop who despises them for their wealth when his village is so poor (Nottage 2004, 174). Her Pulitzer Prize-winning play *Ruined* (2008) was inspired by the civil war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. As Kate Whoriskey, the play’s original director and Nottage’s companion during her research trip to Uganda and the Congo, writes in her introduction to the play, Nottage “was interested in portraying the lives of Central Africans as accurately as she could,” which included the positive (unreported in Western media), as well as the negative (too often the focus of African representation in the West): “What was so rich about our trip is that we witnessed great beauty, strength and artistry” (2009, xi-xii). Set in a bar and brothel that serves both the soldiers and the rebels, Nottage’s play shows the madam, Mama Nadi, a victim of sexual violence herself, as both protecting her girls and exploiting their bodies for sexual profit. Female bodies become battlegrounds for competing interests in the play, leaving both body and land the eponymous ruined.

In the next essay, “Performing Peace and Democracy in Nigeria: Bakare’s Outing in *Langbodo*,” Tosin Kooshima Tume asks a lot of questions concerning Rasaki Ojo Bakare’s production of the play *Langbodo*, and examines the epic manner in which the play addresses the questions which pose as threats to national peace and unity: what are the indices for peace, democracy and nation-building, as outlined in *Langbodo*? Could the Total Theatre theory come in handy in the creative efforts at conscientizing a people? How effective is the creative effort of Bakare in using *Langbodo* to chart a useful course of action for nation construction? Tume argues Bakare’s re-interpretation of the *Langbodo* text is a surgical intervention which doesn’t exactly fulfil fixated expectations but instead offers a combination of elements of various Nigerian cultures to answer those same questions. Tume wisely observes that, “To perform Africa, one has to communicate Africa,” an idea the reader would be well to bear in mind for the rest of the volume as well.

The third and final essay in part one could have easily been the first essay in part two, as it considers both dance and drama (and thus demonstrating the arbitrariness of scholarly categories). In “Ubiaja Ikho Dance Drama in Contemporary Nigerian and African-American Drama” Juliana Okoh uses Ubiaja Ikho dance drama as paradigm to explore the use of themes, myths and rituals which are traceable to African indigenous cultural traditions in exemplary contemporary Nigerian and African-American drama, in particular the author’s own *Cry for Democracy* and

Ntozake Shange's *For colored girls who have considered suicide when the rainbow is enuf*. By considering preparation, performance, audience participation and extraliterary devices comparatively, Okoh argues both plays utilize Ikhio dance drama to create self-awareness for performer and audience alike. It provides an excellent transition into the next section.

The second section of the volume focuses on representation of Africa through indigenous music and dance. In her chapter on cultural identity and children's folk music in the Motherland and diaspora, Eunice Ukama Ibekwea argues that folk music is one of the greatest avenues for "propagating, perpetuating and transmitting cultural identity." She also observes that many folk music traditions emerge out of hybridity and cultural encounter. Jazz and Reggae, for example, owe their origins to Jamaica and West Indies and came as a result of integration of local and foreign experiences during the middle passage, where the victims resort to music as a means of expressing resistance to the power of colonial imperialism and enslavement. It is against that background that her chapter seeks to examine African children's folk music at different stages of development covering the ages between two and ten, in order to find out how these music help in propagating and fostering cultural identity both within and outside Africa.

Many American and European dance programs offer courses in 'African dance,' the very name of which is problematic, as Victor Thompson examines in his essay. Thompson reminds us that much 'African dance' is not performed on a stage or in a theatre, but as part of a religious or communal rite. These movements have meaning imbued to them by their culture, which then are presented out of context when transferred to the stages of the West. Dance is a product of culture, yet culture is in the body, and perceptions of the body vary from culture to culture.

In "Africa to America: Black Choreography in Search of Global Interaction in Contemporary African Dance Genre," Thompson observes: "African dances (like dances in other cultures) are vulnerable to cultural dynamics especially when they are constantly exposed to foreign climates. Such exposure will trigger choreographic transformation on the dance. Within the larger heterogeneous African society, there exist various dimensions of cultural transformation and the dance culture is not left out in this development which occurs as a result of intentional or arbitrary cultural interface." This fact would seem to indicate that, "authentic experience of traditional African dancing in the shrine may not be achievable or plausible within the western theatrical matrix." As such,

adjustments must be made on both ends (performer and audience) when African dance is presented outside of its context.

Oluwadamilare Ayeyeri, like Thompson, a practitioner as well as a scholar, offers a first person account of the representation of Africa to American audiences. Using Yorùbá Bātá, a Nigerian drumming and dance practice, as his point of departure, this ethnographic case study explores how a performing artist regulates what is presented as “African culture” to his audiences in the United States, most notably Santa Fe and Clovis, New Mexico. Research data included interviews, ethnographic field notes, video documentation, and reflexive accounts on co-performance in order to explore how the artist, a percussionist from the Yorùbá Àyàn drumming lineage in Erin Osun, Nigeria, adapts his practice to fit his new community and context for social and economic leverage as well as to accommodate his principally Western audience.

Challenges abound in representing traditional African culture to contemporary audiences. In “From Ikpirikpe-ogu to Nkwa-Ike: Adapting Igbo Traditional Dance for a Contemporary Audience” Christian Nwaru, yet another scholar-practitioner, considers the adaptation of traditional performance within the same medium for a more modern audience. Observing some significant narrative gaps in the current state of *Ikpirikpe-ogu*, a traditional Igbo dance form, Nwaru proposes a critical investigation on the archetype dances in the Igbo traditional society through interviews with performers and scholars leading to a “roadmap” for creative practice in the studio which involved re-creating and re-interpreting of an earlier story in the light of new realities. Through extensive academic and field research, he has created a holistic narrative called *Nkwa-Ike* which not only employs a dramatic plot to fill the missing gap in *Ikpirikpe-ogu* but which he also becomes a new addition in the inventory of an Igbo dance theatre.

Looking at the larger picture of the Diaspora, Casmir E. Onyemuchara considers Nigerian dance in Brazil and Cuba. He argues that during the Trans-Atlantic slave trade, many Africans were brought to the Western hemisphere as slave labor but despite attempts by Euro-Americans to eradicate African culture in these victims, the displaced Africans maintained strong “Africanness” (especially “Nigerianness” for those taken from West Africa, if one might use that anachronism) especially in the area of performance/dance culture. His chapter offers an analysis of the aesthetics, sameness and dissimilarities of dance where applicable between the adopted nations and the Motherland. As a contribution to existing works on Diaspora studies, his study is also significant because it addresses the reasons behind the success of this “Nigerianness” in these

countries, such as nostalgia, bonding, communication and resistance. The chapter concludes that, since these “New World Nigerians” have maintained their cultural identity despite their transcultural struggle and oppression; they are not lost but rooted in the Motherland though planted in different soil.

The third and final section explores cinema and its representations of Africa in the Motherland and around the globe, for better or worse. I began this introduction by outlining the negative or inconsequential image of Africa in Western popular culture as either the disaster continent or the place of happy, singing, animals. The following six chapters construct a much more nuanced, complex construction of representations of Africa through electronic media that explores key issues within Africa and the Diaspora, not always encountered in other contexts.

Western cinema engages in “Afro-pessimism.” Martha Evans and Ian Glenn maintain that the recent representations of Africa in western cinema are both bleak and cannot be attributed to mere ignorance on the part of the filmmakers: “The Africa in these films is much more brutal than in earlier representations, but it harder to attribute this to filmmakers’ ignorance or racism. These films have been better researched, especially in the attention paid to realistic detail, resulting in a bleak, Afropeessimist outlook...Afropeessimism is the consistently negative view that Africa is incapable of progressing economically, socially or politically” (2010, 14-15). Evan and Glenn conclude that the imagery and narratives in western cinema and journalism “equate the continent with famine, disease, violence and political turmoil, even if this was never the journalists’ - or filmmakers’ - intention” (2010, 15). In the attempt to “transcend the stereotypes of earlier films...what transpires is a new set of stereotypes and commonalities - the emblematic child soldier, the corrupt official, the meddling multinational, and the sacrificial white do-gooder...resulting in an Afropeessimistic outlook that at the same time fails to portray the real challenges facing the continent” (2010, 32). In other words, just as African theatre about Africa within the continent differs radically from the African theatre presented in the west (which also tends to be Afropeessimistic), African cinema bears little resemblance to western cinema about Africa. As noted above, even the technology and media of production is different - the Nigerian video-film has no equivalent in the west (see Wilmink 2001).

Nollywood (the Nigerian film industry) has earned a reputation for being prolific, provocative and profitable (see Onishi 2016). In his excellent study *Trends in Nollywood: A Study of Selected Genres*, Barclays Foubiri Ayakoroma sees the Nigerian film industry as being the current dominant generator of images of Africa, claiming Nollywood is

“projecting Nigerian culture, and indeed the African continent, to the outside world” (2014, 20). One might note, however, that the availability of Nollywood films is often limited to areas with large expatriate Nigerian populations, as they remain the key market outside Africa for such films. Nevertheless, Nigeria is the largest producer of cinema in Africa, and her films are shown in cinemas and on television throughout the continent (Wilmink 1993, 363). Melanie Wilmink, however, also sees it “problematic” to identify films as solely Nigerian, as the industry clearly draws on Western models and often relies on other nations for crew, cast and even source material, although it has also clearly been shaped by Yoruba Travelling Theatre and Nigerian urban culture (1993, 364).

If that is the case, one might find a useful case study in “Presenting History in the Representation of Historical Events: A Critical Reading of Lancelot Oduwa Imasuen’s *Invasion 1897*,” Barclays Foubiri Ayakoroma’s contribution to this volume. The 1897 Benin massacre and deposing of King Ovonromwen Nogbaisi has been the subject of several plays and an important film by director Lancelot Oduwa Imasuen. Ayakoroma reviews the previous dramas based on these historic events and then compares Imasuen’s film version. Ayakoroma sees the challenge facing the filmmaker in the attempt to present history “as it happened” and maintaining historical truth as much as possible, so that such works could be reference points in establishing historical facts. He sees *Invasion 1897: The Deposition of the Last King* as a classic example of presenting history in the re-presentation of historical facts and offering a model for film as accurate representation of history and a means by which younger generations, especially those raised in visual culture, might be educated about national and international history.

There then follows three essays that, although written individually and separately, form an interesting conversation with each other about the challenges of presenting positive portrayals of African women in video and cinema, as well as the issue of defining “positive portrayal.” Omolola Tosan Akinwale observes that the film industry as a “creative cum communicative art” has the ability to absorb an entire literary work and improve upon its potential in order to bring about social change by projecting the mediated messages beyond the limits of the literary work, reaching greater numbers. In particular, social change regarding gender awareness becomes much more viable in video films. In “An Appraisal of the positive portrayal of women in Tunde Kelani’s Movies: A study of *Thunderbolt*” Akinwale advocates that Nigerian filmmaker Tunde Kelani employs film as a means of transmitting his idea of ideal African woman

to the world, and offers a close reading of *Thunderbolt* as a model positive representation of women for contemporary Nigeria and Africa.

Femi Osofisan argues that the “sensual and the erotic” was missing from early postcolonial Nigerian culture, as the colonial education system, often run by Christian missionaries, only offered Victorian examples of love - chaste, metaphoric or absent (2016, 206-208). More recently, the culture has transformed: “no area of sexual practice or perversion is considered sacred anymore,” he observes (2016, 211), and just as the British were responsible for the previous absence of sensuality, the “new promiscuous, age [is] deeply penetrated and influenced by American values and the globalized media” (2016, 214). In other words, both attitudes towards the depiction of sex are Western imports, and both attitudes are highly problematic for Nigerian women.

In the essay which follows, Mary Okocha mentions “the large body of patriarchal assumptions on womanhood.” Indeed, after a survey of those assumptions, she goes on to examine how, “Nigerian women are emerging from silence, transcending the many limiting borders imposed on them by patriarchal-traditional or post-colonial structures, and taking positions as the mouth-piece of their gender even from various polar ideological stances.” She sees Video-Films as a medium for “repositioning the Nigerian woman” not just in cinema but in society as well, calling for filmmakers to “look at alternatives for women in society rather than persistently portraying the stereotypical African woman.” She concludes that Video-Films “are still bound in the constraints of tradition as defined by men in their social and domestic relations” and thus work “to be less reserved in highlighting choices and opportunities for women in society, particularly in their portrayal of the social and domestic lives of African women.”

Charles A. Ogazi and Ibitayo O. Odetade agree with Osofisan’s second observation, that Americanized attitudes and approaches towards sexuality problematize the representation of women in African cinema. Expanding beyond Nollywood to Ghallywood (Ghanaian cinema), they argue that the sexualization of African women in the film industries of these two respective nations represents a new kind of colonialism, one that negatively impacts African culture as surely as previous colonial impositions have. While they do not consider the sexualization of Nigerian men, the point is well taken that western objectification of women as sex objects represents a form of imperialism and sexism. Siting their ideas in the history of the development of Nollywood cinema, they argue that these industries “debase African cultural values in the name of producing films. To these few, film making is arguably just a ‘licensed’ innovative platform

to unleash conceived 'anti-African' behaviours such as nudity, vulgarity and uncultured sexual acts. Thus, posing Africa to be a barbaric continent without culture and values especially before the teeming innocent audience such as children and teenagers, who may be incapable of separating right from wrong decisions." While some Western scholars might be concerned with the idea that women's sexuality must be protected for traditional reasons, again the point is well taken that Nigerian and Ghanaian cinemas are responsible to the cultures that produce them. As Opubor reasons, "If Black and African people are to intervene successfully in the protection of accurate images of their heritage (culture) in the media of the world, they must use the technology of the media in a way that is compatible with their ethos (1979, 7). The sexualization of women in Nigerian pop culture (adverts, films, hip-hop videos, etc.) is the direct result of the importing, consuming and imitation of Western (and especially American) popular culturalism. Thus, the sexualization of African women is an ongoing, neocolonialist enterprise driven by American culture. Like Akinwale and Okocha, Ogaze and Odetade see film as "a potent agent for social change and they advocate that African filmmakers should strictly respect African cultural values and desist from using film to showcase women as "professional sex objects" under the excuse of attempting to meeting the demands of realism and an alleged audience that seeks nudity and sex in cinema.

Nollywood is arguably the third largest film industry in the world after the United States' Hollywood and India's Bollywood. Therefore, by sheer virtue of Nigeria's population and the consequent reach of the industry, Nollywood has not only become culturally and politically significant, but it has also made ample contributions to and impact upon the socioeconomic life of its practitioners and audience. For instance, Nollywood is a major employer of labour in Nigeria. Scores of entrepreneurs and creative professionals are engaged as actors, directors, camera operators, scenic, makeup and costume artists, location managers, and production assistants, to mention a few. Since the film industry anchors its works on the portrayal, reflection and representation of cultural identity/identities, it is important to critically study and evaluate the portraiture and representations of Nigerian culture in the movies vis-à-vis popular culture and trends in the global entertainment industry. Sola Fusudo's "Identity, Creative Reality, and Representations of Popular Culture in Select Nollywood Movies" examines and interrogates the place and influence of culture, as well as its identification and representation in Nigerian artistic and cultural works through a critique of select Nollywood movies.

The final essay in the volume brings together several different narratives and tropes about people of African descent in the United States and centers on responses to the killing of unarmed African American Michael Brown by a Euro-American police officer in Ferguson, Missouri.

The so-called “Ferguson Effect,” which various individuals argue is that crime rates have risen in the United States since police are now afraid to stop people of color for fear of being accused of racism or of having their actions questioned afterwards, is purported to be the direct result of out-of-control African-American communities preferring violence to police presence (MacDonald 2015). As Baron Kelly argues in his contribution to this volume, the debate over Ferguson reinforces the popular American trope of African-as-ape. (In fairness, it is not just the United States that does this. In Germany there are so few actors of color that in many theatre companies, when performing plays that require a character to be African or of African descent, the German actors will wear gorilla masks to play those “Black” characters. Let us reflect what that says about the humanity of those characters.)

As with Ogazi and Odetade, Professor Kelly is concerned with representations of Africa that present people of color as barbaric and savage. He begins with an examination of the representation of Black people as apes in popular culture and racist propaganda, with a focus on two specific instances: the depiction of the indigenous people of Skull Island (located allegedly in the South Pacific) as African in the motion picture *King Kong* (1933) and the reference to African-American protestors as “apes” by a Ferguson police officer in the wake of the shooting death of Michael Brown. Kelly’s research bears up what I argued at the beginning of this introduction: that people of African descent are presented in popular culture as being savage, prone to violence, and in need of external policing by those from outside (read: Europeans and Euro-Americans) and there is little difference in American media between the people of color in *Hotel Rwanda* or *Blood Diamond* and those of Ferguson.

This volume, we hope, represents an analysis and a corrective to what has often been presented in the west as depictions of an Africa that does not actually exist. We also hope it represents an extended dialogue between African scholars and artists about the challenges of representing themselves and their respective societies within and without Africa. As noted above, so many of the contributors to the volume are practitioners themselves. Thus sections of this book are not only analysis of representation, but practical guides on how to approach these performance and media forms as artists as well. We, collectively, are not merely writing

about the work of others, but analyzing and foregrounding the challenges of representing Africa as the people who are doing the representing themselves, as much as scholars and teachers. It is our hope the volume, multifaceted as it is, will serve as both model and building block for the next generation of representers and audiences to do it again, do it better.

PART I:

THEATRE AND PERFORMANCE

CHAPTER ONE

LORRAINE HANSBERRY'S *A RAISIN IN THE SUN*: THE AFRICAN DIASPORA'S IDENTITY SEARCH AND RACISM / DE-SEGREGATION DIALECTICS

JOSEPH AGOFURE IDOGHO

For centuries, people of African descent living in the African Continent and in the African Diaspora, were and are continually marginalized as part of the legacy of slavery and colonialism. There is a growing consensus that racism and racial discrimination have caused people of African descent to be relegated to second class status in many aspects of public life globally, that they have suffered exclusion and poverty, and that they are often “invisible” in official statistics. Although there has been progress towards bridging these discrimination and relegation ordeals, the situation still persists, to varying degrees, in many parts of the world.

These discriminations persist without the militating factors having been considered. For instance, the movement of populations from Africa was always a response to political, social, religious, and economical or other related factors. After the colonial era, the motivations for these movements changed. The effects of colonization and decolonization always had an impact, directly or indirectly, on the economy, thus having a strong influence in migration. According to a survey by the United Nations; African governments have considered migration as the most important population phenomenon, setting aside fertility and morality (OECD 1971, xviii).

Thus, in order to protect the migrants in the case of the African Diaspora, in 1948 the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, article 27 mentions that people should be treated equally, irrespective of race, color, gender, language, religion or life pattern, natural or social origin; ownership, birth and status. All countries were signatories to this Declaration. All member countries started accordingly and allowed migration.