

SAFARA

REVUE INTERNATIONALE DE
LANGUES, LITTÉRATURES ET CULTURES



N° 4 Février 2005

Section d'Anglais, UFR de Lettres & Sciences Humaines,
Université Gaston Berger de Saint-Louis, B P 234, Sénégal

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Safara, English Department, Gaston Berger
University, Saint-Louis, Sénégal, n° 4 , February 2005

**Drama and negotiation of meaning for
development: the street performance experiment
in Samaru- Zaria, Nigeria, as case study**

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Introduction

This paper sets out to discuss how a street theatre experiment in the Northern Nigerian town of Samaru- Zaria attempts to negotiate meaning for development. The experiment in question is the 1996/97 street theatre performance (Samaru Project) tagged "The Bola Project" by the two hundred level class of the Ahmadu Bello University Drama programme. Samaru project is an outreach programme that takes the form of the intercourse between the University and its immediate environment. The attempt is to marry town and gown and make the University relevant to its host community.

We shall begin however by clarifying the meaning of negotiation and the understanding of it adopted in this paper in order to ensure that the reader is not mystified about the ways that we reach our conclusions. For even though participants in a negotiation try to maximize their advantage at the table, there is, at first, an agreement no matter how loosely reached on the way the game is going to take place. It is therefore, at this stage necessary to provide an explication of the ramification of the concept, and set the framework or yardstick within which it can be used as our tool of analysis in the case study because:

... negotiation involves first joint agreement on a formula defining the part of the problem to be resolved, identifying the agreed perception of it, establishing a criterion of justice, for settling details and only the resolving those details which fit within the formula.(Zartman 1978:10)

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So what parts of the problem do we need an agreed formula to define?

It is obvious from the focus of this work that “drama” and “negotiation” are key terms. But the crucial thing is how the former in its attempt to communicate meaning carries out the latter with its audience, which in the context of this work could be the reader or the spectator. Drama is negotiation and negotiation is drama. The first mimetic impulse by man was to negotiate and come to terms with his environment. Exposed to the vagaries of nature, man had to inveigle the forces in order to meet his basic requirements of food and shelter.

Gradually, man moved from one-off flukes to a more sustained and permanent system of operation, hence the introduction of rites. Once achieved, such flukes were then celebrated via re-enactment and re-creation as a way of codification for future replication. Though the direct impact of these enactments on future games could not be quantified, there is ample evidence that it was yielding results (generating meaning) in man’s continuous attempt to negotiate with his environment and arrive at meanings that are relevant for his sustained survival and existence. George Thomson’s observation on the performance of these rites is very instructive:

By a supreme effort of will, they endeavour to impose illusion on reality. In this they fail, but the effort is not wasted. Thereby the physical conflict between them and their environment is resolved. Equilibrium is restored. And so, when they return to reality, they are actually more fit to grapple with it than they were before. (Ogunbiyi 1981 :4)

From the above, it becomes obvious that drama evolved as a negotiatory art. This role has not changed today. Drama has only been responding to the complex and ever changing world. Every age and context has led to the development of corresponding drama. The more complex the environment becomes, the more complex the drama that is evolved to restore the equilibrium.

Writing in *Performance Analysis: An Introductory course book*, Colin Counsel and Laurie Wolf assert that:

As heirs to the artistic realism of the nineteenth century, we are perhaps still inclined to think of artworks as windows on to the ‘real world’ and of ourselves as neutral, passive recipients of their meaning. But

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meaning does not exist in the material world, it is a human product, a product of culture, and the interpretation of plays and painting novels and films requires a reader who is culturally competent.... The relationship between viewer and viewed is thus a symbiotic one, the viewer performing interpretative acts predicated by the viewed, while the viewed itself - the object as it is perceived - is in turn constructed, endowed with meaning in the gaze of the viewer. This complex and shifting relationship between the producers and consumers of objects, the cultural context in which they operate, and the knowledge which shape their operations, has political consequences, for as Althusser asserts, it is by such means that individuals are 'interpolated'.(Counsel and Wolf 2001:177-178)

What Counsel and Wolf are saying is that there is no such thing as a neutral audience. Every encounter with a work of art produces and generates meaning because both the artist and the spectator are products of the society with shared experiences, which is brought to bear on the art in terms of appreciation. Meanings are therefore, generated because the art in question is a historical and environmental phenomenon. Personal idiosyncrasies and ideological predilection also come into play in the interpretative processes.

Ultimately, ideological positioning comes in since "performance is a cultural practice, a practice of representation, and so inevitably enters the arena of ideology"(Counsel and Wolf 2001:3). Ideology does not exist in the abstract realm of ideas, it is rather reproduced in familiar institutions around us including drama. So we build our own attitudes, which we take into performances; and this helps our appreciation, understanding or rejection of it. Ideology helps us come to terms with existing order. It does not do this however by integrating everybody. In this regard as observed by Counsel and Wolf, Raymond William's 'cultural materialism' theory is very relevant to us here:

'Cultural materialism' typically seeks to relate texts and performances to their cultural and historical contexts. Rather than view those contexts as monolithic, however, he stresses their inherent complexity and pluralism, and hence their potential for contradiction and change. Ideology he asserts, is never unified but always takes at least three concurrent forms: current ruling ideology constitute the dominant ideology, those coming to

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prominence comprise the emergent, while the residual describes those whose formal dominant position have waned.(Counsel and Wolf 2001:193)

Thus, while, it is possible for a large percentage of the audience to arrive at the same meaning in the negotiatory process of a dramatic event or a written text the others are likely to feel differently. But what is important is that to accept to take part in a negotiation is to agree to a certain outcome that must not be uniform. This happens by accepting to read a text or witness a performance. In the case of a performance for instance, to gather is to accept to participate in the dramatic event. Within this, interaction happens on two levels:

There is the on-stage conflict of forces, which constitutes the plot of the drama, and there is the engagement with the audience in an imaginative act of constructing a possible world ... performers state by their actions that what they are performing is both real and not real, is in effect simply 'possible'. The audience tests the validity of the perceived meanings (of the performance) within the wider context of culture as a whole (Kershaw 1999:25)

Meaning is therefore, generated not merely because there is interaction between performer and spectator, and among the characters on stage but because of a whole range of other events outside the performance space. This is what is referred to as inter-textuality which is the way "in which a performance text gains meaning for an audience through its relationships to other texts, including the none-theatrical texts which communities produce in the form of folklore, oral history stories, legends and mythologies"(Kershaw 1999:34)

Inter-textuality, though related to all communication situations, is unique in drama for it is one communication situation that overtly tries to convince. For while pretending to entertain and to be 'neutral' drama, by the very nature of its construction and performance, implicates the audience:

Communication in literature, then, is a process set in motion and regulated, not by a given code, but by a mutually restrictive and magnifying interaction between the explicit and the implicit, between revelation and concealment what is concealed spurs the reader to action, but this action is controlled by what is revealed; the explicit in its turn is transformed when the implicit

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has been brought to light. Whenever the reader bridges the gaps communication begins. the gaps function as a kind of pivot on which the whole text-reader relationship revolves. Hence, the structured blanks of the text stimulate the process of ideation to be performed by the reader on terms set by the text. (Kershaw 1999:182)

Any dramatic encounter is a continuous search and contestation of wills to reach equilibrium. As Homi Bhabha cited by Munck and O'Hear notes

... we do negotiate even when we don't know that we are negotiating: we are always negotiating in any situation of political opposition or antagonism. Subversion is negotiation, transgression is negotiation; negotiation is not just some kind of compromise or 'selling out' which people too easily understand it to be. Similarly, we need to reformulate what we mean by 'reformism' ... So I think that political negotiation is a very important issue and hybridity is precisely about the fact that when a new situation, a new alliance formulates itself, it may demand that you translate your principles, rethinking them, extend them...(Munck and O'Hearn 1999:7)

For the purpose of this essay, the negotiation game goes beyond the events in a performance or events that take place in the course of the performance. It extends to other deep structures which include:

Preparations for performance both by performers (training, workshops, rehearsals, preparations immediately before going on stage) and spectators (deciding to attend, dressing, going, settling in, waiting) and what happens after a performance. The ways people cool off and the sometimes extended aftermath of performance are less studied but very important. Cooling off includes getting performers and spectators out of, or down from, the performance; putting the performance space and implements to rest; the aftermath include spreading the news about the performance, evaluating them, and even writing books about them ...(Schechner 1988:ixv)

So how do all these tie up specifically to Ahmadu Bello University (ABU) drama practice?

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NEGOTIATING THE ABU DRAMA CURRICULUM?

From the onset, the Ahmadu Bello University drama programme was unique in conception and execution. The programme started with the clear focus of relevance to national development, having studied the shortcomings of its predecessors. Thus,

planning the Drama Syllabus took cognizance of drama and theatre studies at degree level in Nigeria, in other countries, and, to a certain extent in universities abroad. In Nigeria, the syllabus and practice of the Theatre Arts Department, University of Ibadan, both at Ibadan and on the Jos campus, was closely studied, but its objectives, in terms of students careers and students attitudes towards Nigeria's developing arts, seem confused. The Theatre Arts syllabus of Dar es Salaam University, Tanzania, had clearer objectives for relating theatre training to the situation in Tanzanian schools, factories and Ujamma villages.(FASS/66/3 1976:1)

The soft spot for the Dar es Salaam University syllabus encouraged the adoption of uniquely indigenous approach to the study of drama, which will have at its core an integrated approach towards practical and theoretical work. The theory informs the practice, and the practical work allows increased perception of concepts, a testing of hypotheses and modifications of theory. With this it was hoped students would be prepared for the challenges of the wider Nigerian society. These challenges of the wider Nigerian society are those of development. The curriculum is designed to partake in the positive development enterprise. To this, drama had to interrogate existing paradigms of development in order to fit into a development that services the people.

The pertinent question then was how to challenge the existing development models, which were western in conception and execution. The first task towards genuine development was to challenge the myth of development itself:

a central myth of western society. Once it becomes clear that the practices that we call development depend on shared beliefs rather than on nature or destiny, it becomes possible to challenge them in a way that was not previously possible. In challenging the myth of development it then becomes possible to ask if third world societies must reproduce themselves according to the western myth of development or else remain forever

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in misery and deprivation ... (Munck & O'Hearn 1999: 3)

This is coming from a clear understanding of the fact that 'the production of structures of power and ideology' is completely different from technological wizardry and the production of goods. While the latter may be imported, the former will have to be home grown to even allow for proper domestication and functioning of the latter.

The student is encouraged within the syllabus to gain increased perceptions of his culture and articulate these perceptions. This is achieved by making students experience and investigate the ways people make representations of reality. The students, then present their findings, using various media taking into account the historical, social and cultural contexts of the people. What is to be delivered is as important as how it will be delivered:

There is a strong emphasis on improvisation, in the hope that this will contribute towards the development of a Nigerian acting tradition based on conventions that individual students know from their own background. Thus, in itself, the present syllabus is coherent and takes into account local conditions. (FASS/66/3 1976:3)

Beyond teaching western theories which are syllabi requirements, alternative traditions like that propounded by Brecht the German dramatist whose social vision of drama was considered close to what the programme wanted drama to achieve was celebrated or embraced. But the programme never really departed from the community.

The ABU programme, therefore, came to see drama beyond mere entertainment by addressing the development issue affecting the people. In doing so it also tries to bridge the gulf between people's perception of government and what government actually represent. Thus, the drive to use drama to interrogate development issues is at the heart of the Ahmadu Bello University drama practice.

THE "BOLA" PROJECT

Samaru is Ahmadu Bello University's host community. While there are other surrounding villages, Samaru has become synonymous with Ahmadu Bello University for:

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With the establishment of Ahmadu Bello University (ABU) at Samaru in October 1962, the growth of Samaru became still more complex and more rapid. The subsequent growth of the institution, especially during the decade after its establishment, brought major changes in the demography and socio-economic set up of Samaru. Indeed, Samaru attained an urban status with the establishment and growth of Ahmadu Bello University. (Oyedele 1989:43)

For a drama programme that wants to lay claim to being responsive to its environment, Samaru cannot be ignored. That explains why an entire course has been devoted to studying it and using it as a laboratory for outreach drama.

Every year, the two hundred level students of Drama go into Samaru, conduct research by way of series of questions into the various aspects of the lives of the members of the community, come back into the campus, sit with their teachers, analyse the data, build scenarios and take the plays back to the community. The paradox of the themes explored is that even though the mode of the brand of theatre is ironically tagged popular theatre, the issues explored may not always be popular.

For this particular year, the issue in focus was environmental hygiene. This was why the project was titled “the Bola project”. “Bola” is the Hausa word for ‘Dustbin’. For this particular Samaru project, after data collection, analysis, scenarios building and several rehearsals, the story that finally emerged in performance runs thus:

A song exhorting us to clean our environment for if we do not do it, no one will do it for us ushers us into the play proper. The action is a market scene where lots of items are being sold. From the exchange we get the idea of the inflationary trend in the country.

A trader (woman) then goes to urinate near a bean cake (Kosai) seller whose ware is uncovered which could contaminate the food. Immediately a man comes to buy the unhygienic (Kosai) bean cake to eat. A man who comes to pour refuse in an undesignated area follows this immediately. As the man is being apprehended by a law enforcement agent, the man who bought the un-hygienically kept (Kosai) bean cake earlier is now in pains.

The law enforcement agent lectures the refuse dumper on the evil effect of pouring refuse indiscriminately just as another passer-by is injured through a cut on his leg. The wailing and

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crying dissolves into a song on the harmful effect of indiscriminate dumping of refuse to end the scene.

Action shifts to a compound. A man is seen complaining that the (Kosai) bean cake the wife brought for him has no salt. Wife complains that salt is not available and requests for money. Man storms out that he has no money.

Meanwhile, another woman in the compound comes out to cook. She does not sweep her environment and exhibit all kinds of dirty habit including blowing mucus from her nose and rubbing the same hand on her dress as she continues cooking. A neighbour, apparently a student, warns the woman of this dangerous living. Woman is now vomiting and confesses to being so dirty that she has scabies on her head.

Land Lord meanwhile comes charging at the tenants for their dirty habit, most especially the woman later identified as Mama Hadiza. Before issuing threats of quit notice, Mama Hadiza's condition deteriorates. Land Lord does not have a choice than to come to her aid.

At the hospital, Mama Hadiza is laid down just as we meet a pregnant woman. The chronic condition of Mama Hadiza brings everything to a stop. She is recommended for drip because the stooling and vomiting has dehydrated her. Her husband meanwhile, faints on hearing that he was going to pay five thousand Naria. (N5000.00). Landlord though sympathetic, reminds husband that he should start looking for a new house after he survives the wife's hospital bill.

The last scene brings in a man who comes to pour refuse again in an illegal spot. He bends to add his stool to the refuse. Meanwhile Rabi and Amina meet at the illegal refuse dump and are gossiping about Mama Hadiza's dirty habit.

Rabi retorts, "dirt does not kill an African". Another man comes to pour dirt and complains on living on a sustained diet of bad beans. He can hardly complete the sentence as he runs out to stool.

A group of young girls comes in to sell sugar cane, ground nut and (Kosai) bean cake. Boys who are apparently their friends come to patronize them. A passer by comes to warn them of this kind of dangerous living to bring the play to a close.

So what are the levels of negotiation in the project?

This play takes the entire gamut of people's life as it concerns hygiene. Appropriately, it starts from the market, which is home for all. One interesting thing with the stories as they unfold in various scenes is that there are choices and

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consequences. When the trader goes to urinate in an open space near the Kosai (bean cake) seller, and a man comes to buy the uncovered Kosai (bean cake) to eat as another comes to dump refuse illegally, shouts of disapproval, pity for the Kosai (bean cake) eater could be heard. When the Kosai (bean cake) eater's body configuration changes in pain, it only confirms the audience's fears. Some actually, unconsciously, follow in the body pain. Others simply stay aloof or adopt the attitude of 'it can never happen to me for I will never be as stupid as this man to consume food prepared in this kind of environment.'

The preaching of the law enforcement agent who caught the illegal refuse dumper and the attendant lecture could be considered an 'overkill' except to tell the discerning audience member that the law can catch up with whoever dumps refuse any how. But where was the law all this while the illegal refuse dump grew to compete with the fence?

The sight of the man in pains for eating the uncovered Kosai in a dirty environment should sober the trader who goes to urinate in the open space, the Kosai seller and the man who comes to dump refuse. The negotiation is 'complete' with the audience. If the consequences of the dirty habits as they manifest immediately do not change people then preaching will not.

Just like in the previous scene the perpetrators of dirty habit and those who are unmindful of the consequences also suffer the immediate effect of their negligence. When Mama Hadiza comes out to cook in a dirty environment without sweeping while exhibiting other dirty habits including open sneezing, blowing of mucus from her nose almost into her cooking pot, it was only a matter of time before it catches up with her. Like the previous scene, the result is instantaneous; woman starts vomiting profusely.

Incidentally, the play seems to suggest that the students had a better level of hygiene awareness. The neighbour who warns Mama Hadiza of her dangerous living just before the consequences unfold is a lady student living in the compound.

On another level, the landlord also comes in to complain of the dirty habit of the tenants, and since we were never shown the landlord's house, the critique shows a definite level of awareness of the importance of hygiene. Could the larger implication be that there is a class dimension to dirtiness? The student is seemingly caught up in this dirty environment because she leaves in the same compound with dirty people. The landlord is isolated

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from this until he comes to see the lowly placed. But which ever it is, the message is that the dirty environment breeds disease.

The play returns to the public square in the end as we see youths exhibiting different dirty habits. As the song that ushered us into the compound says, there are people who are dirty inside their homes, 'they rob shine' and come out neat only to be followed by dirty habit again.

The pattern for the project is for the students to first meet with their lecturers in classroom setting to go through the basic rudiments of research. The preliminary discussion normally covers the course philosophy, identification of thematic area when necessary, theoretical background by way of introduction to popular theatre theories and practicals.

Above all, the teacher(s) and the students agree on the "dos and don'ts". Students learned about resentful attitudes, which may make members of the community to withdraw, such as putting on 'airs', the unnecessary feeling of superiority, taking notes during interviews, which may make the respondent suspicious etc.

The next stage is the grouping of the students for the purpose of covering as much of the target community as possible so that the play and issues that may emerge in the end will be broadly representational. An important factor during this stage is gender and language. The grouping has to take into consideration the linguistic, cultural and religious sensibilities of the people. As much as possible, except where it becomes impossible, a fluent Hausa speaker must be included in a group for as much as Samaru is a cosmopolitan environment, there are still homesteads where Hausa remains the only viable means of communication.

When all these are sorted out the students are then ready to go into the community. The data so collected is brought back to the Drama Village or a class for discussion. If it is considered inadequate, the students are sent back until enough data is collected.

A discussion of negotiation in this play will be incomplete if we simply jump to the analysis of the play. As we may have noticed, the 'finale' performance is just part of the process. No meaningful discussion can take place without looking at the events long before and after the performance.

Oga Steve Abah, a long-standing partaker of this experiment correctly observes that:

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I think in terms of the negotiations that happen outside of the university campus, you are talking about first of all negotiating amongst the students and staff who leave the university to go and work outside their locale which is the university set up. The first negotiation is the contradiction, which exists between their own status within the university and where they are going to outside.(Abah 1997:Interview)

Here are students who have come to the ivory tower to acquire degrees just like other students in other disciplines now going into communion with villagers. Though most may be from this kind of poor background, by virtue of the education they have come to acquire, they are hoping to graduate and join the rich class no matter how long it takes for a job to come.

The teachers are already on the other side. Yet for this communion to take place, both teacher and students must 'descend' to the level of the Samaru inhabitants.

Even though the picture of the campus may not contradict sharply like those of oil companies in the Niger Delta and their neighbours, the campus is obviously better. For as Oyedele notes:

Regrettably, despite the existence of the university at Samaru, the former has not adequately catered for or improved the health and social needs of the inhabitants of Samaru and its neighbouring communities (Oyedele 1987:47)

So the first level of negotiation is to come to terms with the contradiction of moving from the ivory tower to go into the Samaru community. That is why beyond the theoretical foundation of the course, the coordinators/teachers must first come to terms with how to enter into the community. All the dos and don'ts will be unnecessary if both parties were at par. But the truth is that these are people on different plains of existence. So without necessarily condescending, they have to come to a given level in order to be accepted by the community and in order for dialogue to take place. The students, we must remember, by virtue of the university education they are acquiring are already in a class of their own. The problem is further compounded when the student is from a very rich background. The poor social condition of Samaru also does not help matters, as the inhabitants have to come into the campus to fetch water and get access to other basic amenities.

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The next level of the negotiation is with members of the community (Samaru) as the students struggle to be accepted, understood and also for them to understand the communities' perspective. There will be no play in the first place if there is communication breakdown during the process of data collection. At best, the students and teachers will be left to fabricate a story, which in this case cannot be taken back to the community since the community will disown the story. If the performance is supposed to affect the lives of members of the community, they must own the story. Most Samaru project performances take place against the backdrop of members of the audience recalling places and incidents in the play. If there is no proper negotiation between the teachers / students and the community, this would not have been possible.

The third level which Abah also identifies as the one between the university "students, their teachers plus the community as one group negotiating with the existing conflicts and problems within that community," manifest most in the performance discussion and possible action.

If we go back to the plot of the sketch that emerged in the experiment in focus for instance, this third level of negotiation will become more manifest.

The mode of theatre practice, which produced this experiment, is a fundamental shift from the old guard. Samaru project has a 'traditional' place of performance called 'Sarkin Pawa Road.' But this experiment was performed right in front of the Ahmadu Bello University Intermediate and Junior Staff Quarters otherwise called 'Quarter Three'. As at the time of this performance, the filth in Samaru had effectively crossed the road and the refuse dump in front of the Quarter III though illegal was threatening to be higher than the walls, which fenced the quarters. It was therefore appropriate to move a performance of this nature to the heart of the illegal refuse dump.

Thus, unlike western formal theatre which happens in a "physical environment designed to assist the creation of drama, by neutralizing the messages of the real context in a standard theatre, by the concentration of focus upon a specially created location, while the rest of the space is temporarily suspended in silence and darkness", this drama takes place in an unusual location. This is not a specialised location as such. The setting thus actively mediates against the ready suspension of disbelief.

However, because any theatrical event is not just a window frame where people meet by accident but by some form of

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contract, the performers had to make the place and context accepted by all.

Series of songs are used to mobilize people in the first step of the negotiation game during the performance. The song:

I repent today
I no read pharmacy
Pharmacy too get wayo (trick)
Drama set me free.

The students thus harp on the development worth of drama. Making people realize that even the so-called prestigious courses have not come to interact with the community like this.

After bringing people together with this song and a series of other songs where the performers / spectators poke fun at each other, other students who are not part of the project and adventurous Samaru children who join in the dancing and singing now move out of the arena for the performers preparatory to the real drama.

The song:

A.B.U Zaria Tar muce (A.B.U Zaria is ours)
A.B.U Zaria Tar muce
Nigeria
A.B.U Zaria Tar muce
From Birnin Zau Zau to Zaria the southern....All
people come to drink knowledge.

This song does not only remind the audience that Ahmadu Bello University belongs to all hence the need for this special intercourse since all have a stake, it also implicates every body and provides a justification for the students 'intrusion' into the people's life after all everybody has come to Birnin Zau Zau (Zaria Township) "to drink knowledge".

After gathering sufficient members of the audience the performance begins by welcoming everybody and soliciting for their attention.

Jarma'a Sanunku Dazawa
muna muku maraba
muna muku gasuwa
kuzo kuji mu fa
kuzo ku saurara
oh people we welcome you (general public)
we welcome you
we greet you

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oh people, open your ears
come and hear us
come and listen

Having transformed the venue to an atmosphere congenial to the medium or art form the performance proper can now begin.

Samaru is the larger community where issues are explored for dramatization. The teacher and the students first negotiate to resolve their inner contradictions, the students carry their own contradictions to dig out issues to be built into dramas, the issues are now subjects of performance and discussion with the community.

The Samaru Project produces these varying levels of negotiation, which are in the end synthesized into collective understanding since the post-performance discussion actually has people agreeing with the images in the play. They even move to collectively start doing something about the heap of refuse.

Generally, what we have noticed is that in spite of the focus on the single issue of health / hygiene, other prevailing issues in the society are taken along. When the play opens in the market, the first thing we see and hear is that the price of a measure of beans was now Two Hundred Naira (N200.00k). This was a sharp comment on the inflationary trend in the country then. The audience immediately knows that even the major product for making Kosai that is going to cause health hazard later because of poor handling, is not cheap.

Similarly, in the compound scene Mama Hadiza's husband storms out of the house because he is unable to provide salt, a common and vital seasoning for soup for the wife. His problem is compounded when he is told that he needs to pay Five Thousand Naira (N500.00) for the wife's treatment. He faints at this news because of his poverty condition. But a worse fate awaits him as the landlord is only waiting for him to regain consciousness and for the wife to recover in order to send them packing. In one full sweep, comments are made on the poverty level in the society, the poor health care system and the high-handedness of landlords. As noted by Bappa et al:

These plays focused on the prevalent social problems to be found in Samaru and the other urban centers such as exploitative housing, retrenchment, an appalling lack of hygiene, and the inevitable products of urban poverty such as drug addiction, alcoholism, squalor, prostitution and crime. (Bappa et al 1989:325)

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Even though all these issues may not have been captured in the drama discussed above, at least some have been adequately captured. But one unique thing about this play is that it never deviated from the original intention. The main thrust is kept in focus. While inflation is critiqued, poverty, poor health facilities and landlord's high handedness all receive bashes, the central focus of poor hygiene is never lost. In the first scene, inflation is not the reason why the dirty environment and the Kosai (bean cake) eater developed health problem. Similarly, poverty or the landlord cannot be held responsible for Mama Hadiza's dangerous living. The hospital bill could have been avoided if Mama Hadiza had lived a healthier life.

In the **Bola project** performance, songs are central to the negotiation of meaning. Apart from using songs to call people's attention, they are also a veritable source of entertainment, but more importantly they help to break the barrier of language, as these will stick more in the memory of the audience than the fast-paced dialogue and action of the performances. When the play proper starts the primary objectives of the project (healthier and cleaner environment) are appealed to directly:

Kutashi kuyi gyarau Angwanku
Kune masu zama A ciki
In bakiyi ba waye zai yi muku
Zama da kazanta bayi da kyau

Translation

Stand up and clear your surroundings (environment)
You are the people living in your environment
If you don't do it who will do it for you?
Living with dirt is bad.

Songs have a way of disseminating very strong and emotional messages diplomatically, in a way that does not offend.

The song, which ends the scene though more like a chant, goes to reinforce the message.

Ni tsabtane
Kazanta bai da kyau

Translation

I am cleanliness
Dirtiness is not good.

Here we have moved from the iconic images of actors' behaviours and body configuration, the physical dirty

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environment and habit constituting danger to people's health to the iconic metaphor of the actors' voices conjuring up the imagination to urge them to change from their former state to a new state.

If the songs in the market and the dialogue are predominantly Hausa, the movement into the next scene, which is in the home, now brings some form of pidgin both in dialogue and the opening song to acknowledge the cosmopolitan nature of Samaru.

The song runs thus:

People o dirty no good
Make we no rob shine shine
Dirty no good
People o dirty illness
Every day we dey talk talk.

This song ushers us into the presence of the inhabitants of a multi-tenanted compound who are obviously from different ethnic groups since some do not understand a single word of Hausa. It is apparent that the people in this compound need this song. They seem to leave the job of cleaning the compound to everybody and since everybody's business is nobody's business, the compound never gets swept.

The strategy is not to answer the question for the spectator and usurp his role but the intention is to use theatre to effect change in consciousness rather than to confirm the value of the status quo. Here the drama "include an implied negotiability of tension, the notion of not resolving the tension but rather leaving the audience with questions unanswered for them to answer" (Elam 1979:63-64)

Thus the experiment has partially answered the view that has agitated the minds of some theatre practitioners that:

The mode of being of the new intellectual can no longer consist in eloquence, which is an exterior and momentary move of feelings and passions, but in an active participation in practical use, as constructors, organizers 'permanent persuaders. (Daniel 1999:46)

Whether the experiment has so far been able to:

Help the masses to get organized for the articulation of their agitations for a better struggle by showing them the conditions in which they live, (making) living conditions are precisely as they are, and if possible lead

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them...to discover...that they and only they have the
real and sure possibility of changing these conditions.
(Sambene Osmane *Cinema Quebec No 9* : 12-13)

is another matter all together.

However , because of the mode of dramatic construction,
the debate and attempt to find solutions started straight from the
venue of the performance in the case of the experiments
described above.

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