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Ideological Mutations in the Drama of Bode Sowande

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Abstract
The question of a convenient marriage of ideology and aesthetics in Nigerian drama has occupied the minds of critics for a long time – for some dramatists ideology has no place in their works and thus insist rather on social vision; however, while it is, again, long been established that there is no way of escape from ideology in our time, the concern then is on the ideological mutations in a dramatist and his work over time. This paper engages the works of one of Nigeria's foremost playwrights, Bode Sowande. The paper discusses the different phases of the ideological mutations of the playwright from spiritual and revolutionary nationalism to what the drama is christened for specific purposes.[1] The paper argues that the writer's sensibilities are shaped by the changing fortunes of the society and the current aesthetic and philosophic tangentiality in the African dramatic and theatrical arts of English expression (Uji 44).

Keywords: drama, ideology, aesthetics, revolution.

We shall begin with the ideo-spiritual growth of the character of Moniran in Sowande's trilogy (*The Night Before*, *Farewell to Babylon*, and *Flamingo*).[2] It examines the marriage of the spiritual and the ideological in a character in search of change within a repressive socio-political milieu. This interest is borne by the fact that among the characters that began from *The Night Before*, only Moniran remains consistently conspicuous in the actions of the trilogy. And the central message of the playwright is built around the development of his character as it affects theory and praxis of revolutionary aesthetics in the Third World, especially his tempering of ideology with spiritualism. What one finds in Onita early in *The Night Before* is a corruption of this unity in his philosophy of social regeneration or rebirth that is enmeshed in sexual practice – a physical and spiritual union with Ibilola, akin to the primordial mating of Sango and Oya. Of more importance in the consideration here is Moniran's tendency of becoming within the growth that the environment offers. We shall therefore progressively analyse the interplay of the individual aspiration within the material world around him and the contradictions inherent in the attempt to reconcile the two.

According to Mihai Draganescu in his *Romanian Review* essay "The Tendencies of Becoming", the cosmic feeling is not divorced from the very tendencies of matter; and herein lies a convenient area where man necessarily looks for some of his own natural attributes. Being an autonomous entity of the material world, man's specific aspirations and tendencies are generated by social cohabitation (56). Therefore, when society progresses, it evolves in accordance

with the trend of historical becoming and man, within the circle of its oscillation, is expected to gravitate, acting and deciding in the process. This then means that because the cosmic feeling helps to heighten man's spirituality as well as impels his spirituality to thought and action, he naturally enters the cosmic trend of the universe thereby compelling him to participate, willy-nilly, in the historical trend of the society (57).

In Draganescu's Marxian explanation, the growth of the productive forces which dialectically determines the relations of production is undoubtedly in agreement with the tendencies of becoming. As man living in society, he also has other tendencies but once he has assimilated the philosophical trend of becoming all his other tendencies are subsumed in this trend and would possibly let go his and amplify the *trend* of becoming. In our case, Moniran's tendencies refuse to find a place with the trends of becoming, the historical becoming of the state. And it is obvious that no one can completely withdraw into a tendency *per se* without endangering the trend of becoming, hence Moniran's dangerous choice in the trilogy. For instance, the trend of becoming at the end of *Farewell to Babylon* is acceptable to him until he discovers the Manichaeism of Kasa and withdraws. Kasa's later manifestation does not agree with or favour Moniran's existential becoming. Thus, all woven together in the cosmic feeling (led by Kasa), his wisdom through the process in the application of reason, intelligence and affectivity, among other things, are united in the deepest strata of his spirituality, leading to a conflict of wills. Simply put, the combination of the cosmic feeling and the tendency of becoming makes Moniran a *man of becoming*, as evident in his growth from *The Night Before* to *Flamingo*. In all these, he is seen playing an active role within the social and cosmic life, being consecutively a social and historical agent of change.

From this, Moniran refuses to join the bandwagon, even when Nibidi deflects to join the routine of bourgeois materialism. When the latter, lost in his new dream of the 'polished floor', expresses his impatience with his obstinacy, Moniran makes his position clear:

> I don't know what I want. But I know what I don't want. The rate race. Tell me you will enter the rat race, never knowing your direction but following the great traffic. Have you ever looked at the great mass that moves across Lagos every morning? From dawn to dusk? Hot, congested, slow. Then imagine it is a mass of rats. Thousands and thousands, scurrying about. Big, small, thin, fat, sick, healthy. And they all squeak, bite each other, run over each other, some die, some live – but they go on moving, in Lagos; thousands and thousands. Like a mass of rats. That, my brother, is civilisation, called the rat race (*TNB* 15).

It is against this idyllic tide that Moniran strives to attain for himself, and ultimately for his society, an alternative becoming but which ironically forms the basis of the conflict in the trilogy. In his refusal to join the routine and get on the path to the

rat race, he insists: “Like rates, thousands of squeaking rats. That cannot be our road to progress” (43).

The conflict with the ‘progress’ of the state and its evolution in accordance with the trend of historical becoming accounts for Moniran’s failure to win the Student Union Government election. The university authorities (which are a microcosm of the larger state of Babylon) frustrated the efforts of the young revolutionaries which Moniran is leader and flag bearer. Ironically, it is this past (full of defeat) that helps to fuel his optimism until he is able to mastermind a putsch at the end of *Farewell to Babylon*. It appears that his growth within the context of his becoming can be understood in the light of his understanding of the environment and the conflict of theory and praxis of his Marxist theoretical orientation. Although his failure in that election is attributed to the refusal of the revolutionaries to compromise, it is obvious that their mere shouting of Marxist slogans will not bring down Babylon without a reconciliation of the conflicting tendencies.

Undaunted by this failure, Moniran pursues his ideals further, and by the time we are in *Farewell* he reconciles himself physically with the state and becomes the Chief of Security, but still spiritually far-detached from it, since the sustenance of this spiritual sanity is critical to the fulfilment of his path to becoming and which he hopes to translate into the ‘new’ state. Consequently, he abstains from sexual lust and practice that can contaminate his commitment. Marriage also must wait and so, he sacrifices Jolomitutu (who he intends to settle down with after the revolution) in his quest to salvage his nation; and he indeed losses her in the end!

Ironically too, with the overthrow of the Field Marshall at the end of *Farewell* and the constitution of a new government, the state does not ‘wither away’ in Marx-Engels’ configuration. Thus, being instrumental to the birth of the new government, Moniran finds himself in a dilemma as he soon discovers the ‘crushing fate of tragic history’ which is an albatross in Third World historical becoming. Kasa, the new dictator affirms to him: “You worry me. You’ve always done so. But your country will always be. What it wants to be, not what you want it to be” (*FLG* 24). After all is said and done, Moniran’s spiritual reservation and cosmic endowment as a mode of unravelling the philosophical tensions fails to grasp the tendencies of becoming. In the first instance, he has missed a major step by overthrowing the old regime in a military, albeit bloodless, coup and still expects a government headed by a soldier to be people-friendly.

Moniran, evidently, from the beginning is shown to be against applying brute force to infiltrate the Farmers Movement even when he faces grave pressure from Kaago and at the risk of being suspected for infidelity to the government. In an aside, he confesses the reason for his actions (or inaction):

> What would you do, should you dream of an illumination? A bright lamp that you held in your dream from youth, and now you find your feet lead you to the gates of hell. Would you say to the Devil, I come to fetch embers to burn Babylon? You should be a fool if you did. So you keep sealed lips, and live a dangerous existence (*FB* 65).

In this adoption of dangerous existence, he applies tact and intelligence, hoping to co-opt the farmers and their mentor Dr. Onita after the revolution; but whom he unfortunately losses in prison to the psychotic Cookie. And being a revolutionary humanist, he pardons and co-opts all offenders, believing that the vanquished must have learnt their lessons: "Everyone will participate in the new government. Everybody. Even the offenders in their punishment and the Field Marshall in his enforced exile" (*FB* 126). Uttered at his hour of grace, Moniran's statement at this stage, emanating from the utopian Marxist state after the revolution, is also interpreted in the light of man's existential aloofness (Raji-Oyelade 78-9). This individualist philosophy of man is antithetical to the already professed communal cultural ideology of the play as Moniran's peroration purports:

> You are born alone.
> You dream to exist and live with others…
> Then you die alone and humanity buries you like Dr. Onita.
> Only if you are a hero (*FB* 126-7).

More to this, Moniran's non-retaliatory search for regeneration, though commendable, may be his weakness at this stage. Suffice to add, however, that it is erroneous to infer that his clarion call for comradeship with the farmers after the success of the coup is 'a non-departure after all from the old order' (Gbilekaa 131). Although the revolution is intended to establish an alternative society, this new socialist democracy cannot do without the farmers. After all, it is this search that is able to give the play its dialogic and reflective mood. The situation here is akin to Nasiru Akanji's call in *Come Let's Reason Together* where he maintains that recriminations cannot provide the solution to the incessant violence and disorder in society; it is a vicious circle that can only end by our pausing to reflect on the tragedy and seek a peaceful resolution.

The only contradiction in Moniran's character, as highlighted earlier, is the use of military might. Only here can we castigate him, and, again, for being so blinded by his conviction of becoming that he does not decipher the handwriting on the wall from Kasa's impatience and utter betrayal of greed for power even before the putsch. Commendable as his application of 'an ancient technique of wrestling' to topple the Field Marshall is, is the fact that his spiritual depth of character ought to have constrained him and guided him to unearth the insidious motive of Kasa's whose outward profession of Marxism is only a smokescreen for his opportunistic tendencies.

Apart from the fact that the new government is a military regime, the top-to-bottom revolution is responsible for the obvious lack of ideological transformation in this government. Moniran's hope for parliamentary democracy only looks to be made up of the same old crooks emerging at the top, especially with the questionable pardon of corrupt military officers like Brigadier Mowambe, not only to be the minister of finance but also to become the new president in Kasa's concocted transition in *Flamingo*. The dashing of Moniran's hope is confirmed by Kasa's shocking confession in this altercation:

> **Kasa**: ...The Stock Exchange is at an all-time low. Worse still our people complain – the businessmen precisely. Everyone is complaining about the growing number of 'comrades' in our midst. They grow like cults. Self-righteous too, these comrades. I am a military man, and this 'comrade business worries me. So I have decided to exact a decree against the appellation of comrades and …the growing of beards.
> **Moniran**: Kasa, did I hear you right.
> **Kasa**: Of course you did. And I am the Head of State.
> **Moniran**: Quite so, Your Excellency.
> **Kasa**:…So, no more beards…what do you think, Moniran?
> **Moniran**: I think I'm dreaming, and it is a nightmare.
> **Kasa**: …so we shall release Brigadier Mowanbe. If we cannot prove that he stole money to acquire property, we must release him. And there is no law against receiving gifts. Learned judges of the bench and the Bar Association have told me so. There is no crime called 'waste'. So, Brigadier Mowanbe should be a free man (*FLG* 24).

Kasa's revelation and Moniran's frustration betray a retrogressive trend to the ideals and gains of the revolution and the entire experience only establishes Sowande's anti-utopian ideo-aesthetics in the revolution.

Moniran's choice of self-exile in this circumstance further proves that freedom is a matter of degree. Thus, in his spiritual organisation, his cosmic feeling becomes grossly insufficient without his needs for action, and thoughts for action, coupled with a merger of wisdom and this spirituality. It becomes too late when he cries out: "End this dream. Master this fate. Destroy this message" (*FLG* 25). Instead of mastering his fate, he is consumed by it, even in his withdrawal! Moniran's withdrawal, as said earlier, endangers the trend of becoming, and this is the culmination of his individual self-explication within a 'state' which only pretends to be different from its predecessor. Having been used to serve their purposes, the state plans his elimination knowing full well the obvious conflicting tendencies. If anything, within the paradox of his tragic becoming and the final take-over of power following the now popular revolution which consumes General Kasa himself and his team, Sowande assures his readers/audience that 'from the ashes a new nation will be born'.

Although Moniran's heroism and murder is attributed by some critics to his individualistic consciousness, it is apparent that his call to all and sundry to rebuild is an assurance on his belief in the collective spirit of revolutionary action.[3] Thus, his death does not terminate his ideals. In his death, he attains the consummation of his becoming as he transfuses his spirit into Teriba, albeit a major culprit in his murder. Teriba's submission of himself and all culprits to the judgement of the people's court explains the acceptance of the people, after all, of Moniran's master plan and the victory of his humanistic cause of justice (Uji "Socio-aesthetic Ideals" 69), ultimately, over the tendencies of historical becoming. In his peroration, Teriba enjoins all, rather, empathetically:

> For Moniran who died in the place of frauds, for him a memorial of gold. For our country burning with the rage of flaming, let us build after this baptism of fire, and from the ashes let the spirit of our people rise like a phoenix. For us who obeyed orders without thinking, let our regrets be as deep as an ocean, and let our memories teach us never again to destroy such men as this patriot (*FLG* 52).

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Between the spiritual and ideological interplay, we can also read the interface of spiritual and revolutionary nationalism. Thus, unequivocally, the contradictions of the tendencies discussed above, to a large extent, explains Sowande's ideo-spiritual philosophy of becoming embedded in the individual – acting on behalf of a group – in his quest for an alternative society. But to fully appreciate his transition to his new artistic vision, we shall briefly look further into his marriage of aesthetic ideology and ideology of the aesthetic in his fervent quest for an *equipoise* between materialism and metaphysical reality (Obafemi 226) in his plays under review, which makes him, ideo-aesthetically speaking, a bridge between the extreme metaphysical indulgence of the first generation playwrights and the purely dialectical pre-occupation (Gbilekaa 131) of his peers in the radical school in Nigerian drama. And in his marriage of the spiritual with the dialectical (which he sees as essential ingredient in the needed revolution and emancipation of society), he privileges the former above the latter as seen earlier in Moniran. This emphasis on the spiritual is a mark of departure from the pure Marxist dialectical obsession, and it tempers the volcano common in the early plays of Femi Osofisan, for example.

In the trilogy, especially the first two plays, Sowande espouses on this philosophico-spiritual motif. Apart from Moniran, Onita in his maturation in *Farewell* is made to abandon his earlier libidinal tendencies for a philosophy of spiritual socialism where he now joins the Farmers' Movement as both researcher and mentor, and the philosophy of his book, "The Lease of the Earth", becomes the farmers' philosophy. This new birth earns him incarceration as he attempts to practise it. But in prison, his confession to his co-prisoners explains

his new philosophy when he recounts his refusal of a female student's seductive moves:

> You do not isolate moralities, my girl. You do not preach the ideals of ideologies and fornicate while explaining the charisma of the ideologue…She looked at me perplexed. Oh no, I said. I am still virile, but now I want other things. Wholesome things. The streams of all moralities must run to the same ocean of an ideal (*FB* 93).

Even before his death (which in itself helps to oil the march to the consummation of the revolution), Sowande had established in Onita's new conviction, his confidence in this philosophy. Consequently, those who cannot accommodate it – like Nibidi and Kasa – and endure the revolution, easily give in to the pressures of the materialistic society. This is also evident in Dansaki, leader of the Farmers' Movement, whose ideological commitment is contaminated by fleshly lust, and Sowande does not mince words here that those who indulge in sexual frivolities in the face of an urgent need for cleansing must give way – like Babylon itself – for the more spiritually and ideologically focused like Seriki.

The end of *Farewell* confirms the dominance of spiritual purity over mere dialectical revivalism. Although some critics may fault this fusion as problematic, and the reform as mere bourgeois reformism typical of Third World military insurgencies, one can see in this fusion the playwright's search for a non-retaliatory regeneration – after the revolution, comes reconciliation – although this does not rule out the necessity for a probe. But suffice to add that it is highly suspect to infer, as Obafemi (235) claims, that Onita's initial promethean act of venture through sex is an act of unity needed for the revolution. For Onita's seminal regeneration at this stage only causes acrimony leading to the loss of Dabira in the revolution. The act, definitely, is not one of collectivism but a corruption of the collective revolutionary spirit. Only his later change of heart brings him closer to the grassroots.

Sowande's ideo-aesthetics matures as well as fluctuates through the trilogy. The ritual enactment marking the night before the convocation of the revolutionary students could, in part, form the playwright's spiritual consciousness. This enactment is donned with a mournful atmosphere of the characters who, in their reminiscences, seek anxiously a rebirth, albeit disparately. The playwright places this very mood against the capitalist society now conveniently represented by the character disposition of Nibidi in his ideological backsliding, and whose disparagement of the others portrays a utopianism within strikingly corrupt base and superstructure and prognosticates the inescapable nature of the octopus (state). It is this rat race capitalism that persistently wars against the spiritual and revolutionary nationalism that will give birth to the revolution and seeks to asphyxiate it in its claws.

The growth of the characters in the trilogy progressively exposes all hidden traits and motives. For the graduating students in *The Night Before*, each of them hopes for and ultimately, experiences a rebirth, diversely, either in this play or latter in the trilogy: Moniran transits into the larger society with a new realisation, consecutively working for the government and planning an insurrection against it; Onita achieves it twice, first with symbolic act of mating with Ibilola and a subsequent rebuttal of same; Nibidi discovers himself in his embrace with capitalism, while Dabira, after losing Ibilola, experiences his rebirth in form of a cleansing act in the fire. In their rebirth – spiritual and profane – all, but Nibidi, re-affirm the rejection of the consciousness and learning of the ivory tower which is a microcosm of Babylon, and in them can be seen the embodiment of spiritual socialism or spiritual nationalism.

The re-enactment of the mythic age-long story of the ambitious elephant in *Farewell* who wanted to rule over all creatures is seminal to the fall of the Field Marshall and all tyranny. Moniran had at the beginning of the play laid down his master-plan:

> There is more to say about Babylon and the fire that will destroy it… Maybe in the unseen forces that hold a nation together a reason will be found for our predicament… The only way to topple a giant is to use the impetus of its unrush, an ancient technique of wrestling (*FB* 68-9).

Like the Tortoise, the wisdom pot of the Elephant, Moniran knowing full well that a confrontation with the tyrant might be bloody, adopts a subservient position until the ripe moment. The Elephant in the fable gets angry at the Tortoise's 'word of truth' that, he is a tyrant. Therefore, the Tortoise adopts cunning and as expected, the Elephant falls by it. *A priori*, Sowande's approach at this stage is more humanistic and mature than the early plays of his contemporaries in the materialist school of playwriting in Nigeria. It is this approach that Osofisan adopts in his later plays, including the technique of killing the Elephant in the revised version of *Aringindin and the Nightwatchmen*.

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The beginning of Sowande's movement to the drama for specific purposes can be traced to *Tornadoes Full of Dreams*.[4] *Tornadoes* undertakes a discourse on a world in a 'crisis of change'. Written in 1989 and performed specially to commemorate the bicentenary celebration of the 1789 French Revolution, the play ironically tampers revolutionary rhetorics with the specific occasion for which it was commissioned. In his recourse to history, therefore, Sowande relies on this source material to fuel his revolutionary aesthetics which recommends itself to its readers, espousing on a new slavery that has engulfed African and Third World nations in the twentieth century and lingering still into the twenty-first century. Through this medium, the play goes a little further to interrogate the issue of the morality of history based on the events before and after the Revolution.

Tornadoes is a comment on history – ancient and contemporary. The playwright retells the history and embellishes it to arouse our need for positive action in an age when Africans are still busy in the war with one another without pausing to reflect on the movement of history. In the play which exhaustively exposes the roles played by Africans in aiding their own slavers, the question the play throws at us is: "How can such valiant men (of Africa) go to war only to sell their own people?" (39). Akinlade, the African warrior cum slave dealer, is presented as one in whom the hand of fate plays a trick on. In one of his raiding and dealing in slave, he captures a teenage girl after killing her father, a Sango priest and the girl herself possessed by Sango. This singular act of desecration turns the hand of the clock against him, and with the connivance of Ayinde the wily slave merchant, he himself is captured as slave by the English sailor and slave dealer Sidney.

As the IMP (both narrator and symbol of history) takes us back into history, we are confronted with two historical French and African demagogues, Napoleon and Nkrumah, who act as commentators on the morality of this sordid history. In their analysis, they too take us back to the events leading to the French Revolution proper, and from which the slave colony of San Domingo was consequently liberated. Sowande uses the recollected experiences as springboard for the discussion of all forms of oppression in contemporary world and concludes that like the French example, Africa and the Third World can liberate themselves from the current re-colonisation in form of imposed loans and debt burden from the West. The movement of history here, as re-enacted in the Forum, is a rehearsal of a dialogic revolution. The carnival float clearly exposes how Third World countries are manipulated by Europe and America into becoming their subjects still. But Sowande seems to counter this trend, not only through Nkrumah (in incarnation) but also the Ballad of Compensation, from which he recommends that only compensation for the wrong done to Africa can really speak for the morality of past and present history:

> Africa waits for her compensation
> The people wait for that reparation.
> But what can pay for that humiliation?
> Except history in true revolution! (107).

The playwright does not offer this on a platter of gold: 'waiting' must be accompanied with consistent exercise of will power like the Negro slaves in San Domingo. The African himself must 'snatch this very prize which France has released with a mighty Tornado' (vi), Sowande intones. Thus, in a 'world in a crisis of change', the caveat is:

> Fire your rhythm for your rights.
> Tire your tyrant with your fights.
> No life is sweater than a free life.
> If need be die fighting for those rights (112).

Though a commissioned play, Sowande appropriates his benefactors' obsession with the Revolution to speak to, and for, his own constituency in Africa and the Third World. And in the prophetic liberation and celebration enacted through the last bit of the carnival float, Nkrumah, speaking from after-life, submits.

> I see celebration below Napoleon. The celebrants have stopped the march of history. Just like France stopped the march of history and asked the world to start again. Let history come to a halt, Africa also wants to take the world to a better direction (177).

Utopian as this may sound; the playwright succeeds in establishing that freedom and greatness in the face of the present condition of Africa are still a possibility. Suffice to add that while the play commemorates the French Revolution of two centuries earlier, it equally, possibly, was celebrating the fall of the Berlin walls and communist Russia within the crisis of change that rocked the entire world at the close of the 1980's. the message then is the apparent possibility of the fall of internal and external tyranny.

Since the first performance of *Tornadoes* and his subsequent retirement from university teaching, Sowande and his Odu Themes and Bode Sowande Theatre Academy have been fully engaged in the production of plays for special occasions and purposes, all of which are enlisted in their repertory and also performed from time to time. These include *Mammy-Water's Wedding* commissioned in 1991 by Entertainment Ventures, Lagos; *Ajantala-Pinocchio* for the Chieri International Festival in Italy in 1992, stage adaptation of Amos Tutuola's *My life in the Bush of Ghosts* for the Royal Court Theatre for Young People, London in 1995; a-thirteen part TV serial based on his *Farewell to Babylon* for Clem-Bold (Nig) Ltd, commissioned radio plays in Nigeria and the United Kingdom and commissioned productions of plays by other authors.[5] The most recent play in the Odu Themes repertory is *Super Leaf*.

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Super Leaf is an awareness campaign on sickle cell blood disorder. Since 1999 when the play was first commissioned by Guaranty Trust Bank of Nigeria as *Orin Ata*, this workshop play has to date enjoyed other sponsored productions in Nigeria and the United Kingdom. The play is dedicated to persons living with the sickle cell disorder and is conceived as a convergence of Theatre-for-Development and mainstream theatre. It is created around the devastation and dilemma visited upon a Chief Mogaji and his family. His son Tilewa suffers from the sickle cell anaemia and genetic blood disorder, a condition that is common to millions in Africa, Asia and the Mediterranean heritage.

In his desperation to save his son, Mogaji accommodates a synergy of therapy; hence, we encounter the Orisha archetype represented by Iya L'osa, the

Christian archetypes and the Western orthodox medicine in an interesting compromise of operation. The marriage of prayers and practices brings in Ewenla the spirit of herbs who invokes the 'super leaf' (*orin ata*) and prescribes for Tilewa. Although the play creates an atmosphere of grief, pain and anguish, continuous drumming and sporadic chanting and surreal encounter with the spirit world of angels and herbs help to heighten the drama. This metaphysical experience causes the young man's reluctance to return to his body and consequently, to consciousness.

Writing from the personal experience of having lost two sons from this disorder within three months of one another in 1988 at a time he, like many others, had no awareness of what the sickle cell was, Sowande after about a decade has crafted this play as a 'slow process of therapy and education', a healing theatre through which this 'dreadful condition may be better understood and controlled' (*SL* viii). Consequently, he opts for a complementary option between herbal and orthodox medicine and prayers.

Sowande's obsession with the spiritual in his early plays finds fuller expression in *Super Leaf*, with the play's invitation, not for the political revolution now, but for a revolution in medical science in search of a solution to a health condition that is ravaging poor societies today. For example, as seen in the play, this condition brings social and marital stigma to the patient. Consider the negative response of others to the marriage plan between Tilewa and Mubo, albeit the latter disregards the opposition. This stigma may be responsible for why the disorder 'hides itself' from us as many are not willing to talk about it. The Odu Themes campaign focuses on people's ignorance of the seriousness of this condition and recommends ways of tackling it. It intones that the future of all healing depends on identifying the *root spirituality* and treating the *root physicality* of the disease.

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In the plays of Sowande, what one finds therefore is a convenient wedlock between aesthetic ideology and the Eagletonian ideology of the aesthetic. It again confirms the playwright's own confession to a critic: "As far as I am concerned, the aesthetics of the arts is as important as the ideology of the writer" (Uji 477). This is the marriage he strives to arrive at between the spiritual and the socio-aesthetic in the plays discussed above. Thus, in this ideological interface we find the place of time and environment in artistic development.

End-notes

[1] The classification is borrowed from Victor Dugga as expressed in his *Creolisations in Nigerian Theatre*.

[2] This refers to *The Night Before* and *Farewell to Babylon* in Bode Sowande, *Farewell to Babylon and other Plays* (England: Longman, 1979); and *Flamingo* in Bode Sowande, *Flamingo and other Plays* (England: Longman, 1986). Abbreviations shall be used for page references as respectively *TNB*, *FB* and *FLG*.

[3] For details on this see Olu Obafemi, *Contemporary Nigerian Theatre* (Lagos: CBAAC, 2001) 238.

[4] First commissioned and performed in 1989. Page references are to the published edition in Bode Sowande, *Tornadoes Full of Dreams* (Lagos: Malthouse, 1990).

[5] The Repertory is not willing to release copies of these performed plays, most of which are not yet published, possibly, for security reasons.

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