

## Editorial/Introduction

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This volume is on the British-Nigerian playwright who, aesthetically represents Africa on the British stage as an 'outsider' in the mainstream of British theatre culture, although scholar-critics such as Samuel Kasule have sometimes stated that he occupies an insider-outsider and intercultural multi-location from which his work produces characters that interrogate themselves within the complex settings of the British society as well as espouse themes that provide avenues to question the values of cultural and cultural interactions, and their impact on British theatre. With plays such as *The Estate* and *Iya-Ile (The First Wife)*, Agboluaje reconstructs the Nigerian social and political system, by transforming the alienation of the society into a satire of the middle class; acknowledging and reflecting the late twentieth century African social histories and cultural relationships in dramas whose narratives resonate with the [now more visible postcolonial] British audience. Agboluaje's drama and satire is located at the intersection of religion, ethnicity and cultural issues where the past and present are interrogated contextually, as he asserts in the interview which is a main feature of this volume.

This volume is made up of two detailed essays by scholars who have intimate knowledge of Agboluaje's work and have worked with the playwright over an extended period. There is also an extensive interview on Agboluaje's background, his work and the direction of his dramaturgy. We conclude with a short play, *Wait*, written by the dramatist on the impact of societal expectations on the girl-child.

In the interview, conducted on a balmy August morning in 2018 in the grounds of the National Theatre in London, Oladipo talks about his motivation, his writing style and influences, and why he writes to challenge received knowledge, to 'look at our existence from a psychological, spiritual and material point of view', and to "stop unquestioningly following a leader, which may not lead us to where we need to go or be'. More importantly, he discusses his *entre* into the British theatre world.

The interview has retained the informality of the encounter, in particular to present Agboluaje as an intense and committed writer who enjoys experimenting with forms and styles, to re-present traditional Yoruba popular performance culture for the contemporary period. His plays include: *Early Morning* (2003); *God is a DJ* (2006); *The Estate* (2006); *The Christ of Coldharbour Lane* (2007); *For One Night Only* (2008); *The Hounding of David Oluwale* (2009); *Iya Ile [The First Wife]* (2009); *Mother Courage in Africa* (2009); *The Garbage King* (2010); *Say Goodbye Twice* (radio play, 2010); *Giant Killers* (2013); *Threshold* (2014); *Obele and the Storyteller* (2014); *Immune* (2015); *Patience* (2015); *Black Lives, Black Words* (2016); and *New Nigerians* (2017).

In "Brecht in Pidgin: Oladipo Agboluaje's *Mother Courage in Africa*", Sam Kasule presents Agboluaje's drama as an emerging phenomenon that is caught between the longing to represent and remember the Africa left behind and the lives of Africans in the diaspora with its pervasive pitiless demands. The essay looks at how Agboluaje travels between different cultures and 'worlds' in this memorialising, using his adaptation of Bertolt Brecht's *Mother Courage* and Brecht's original text, in what he calls the dramaturgy of 'shifting locations'.

The second essay is Victor Ukaegbu's interpretation of Agboluaje's "stylistic and theatrical techniques" which he employs in *The Hounding of David Oluwale* (2009). In "Restless Pasts: Ghostly Truths in Oladipo Agboluaje's *The Hounding of David Oluwale*", Ukaegbu 'focuses on how the playwright's combination of theatre styles and interrogation of the materiality and ambiguity of words, facts and historical experiences produces a drama/text' in which a character's history is transformed from a personal tragedy to trans-national dilemma. Pertinently, Ukaegbu raises the idea that, Agboluaje's drama questions the ambivalence of race relations and immigration policies in the UK.

This is the first volume of any journal or collection devoted entirely to the work and Oladipo Agboluaje and this reflects the position of this playwright not only on the British stage, but equally his relevance as a postcolonial African writer whose dramas investigate, explore and expound on the experience of the postcolonial subject in their daily encounters with the British social and political structures. This volume also marks the beginning of including a play written by an African or with an Afro-centric focus.