Crossroads at Paris: Nigerian, Brazilian, and British Theater 1968-1971

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Crossroads

In Yoruba tradition, a crossroads (*orita*) opens up into several directions at once (see Irele). It is not so much a physical plan, but a symbol of indeterminacy. The idea of crossroads is inherent to ancient Western theater and perhaps to the Western worldview as well. Classical Greek drama used the idea of crossroads as a spatial moment of indeterminacy, especially in the myth of Oedipus who kills his father Laius at a crossroads between town and the oracle of Delphi. Oedipus, in Sophocles' drama, fights against the Oracle and fails to recognize the significance of the crossroads. He blinds himself in order to see inward, to recognize both good and evil, which he could not distinguish at the moment of murder at the crossroads. He refuses to accept the fate associated with his birth. The traveler has to make a choice, not knowing where any direction will lead, but in making the choice, the traveler exercises individual liberty from external controls, controls such as social codes, repressive governments, slavery, academic knowledge. Indeterminacy is a buffet of choices, especially in performance art, which assumes taking on a persona and acting on choices inherent to free will. Historically, the symbol of a crossroads is associated with civilizations emerging from oppression, especially the oppression of historical conquest, and the crossroads was a powerful symbol of indeterminacy at the time of the worldwide political upheavals of 1968, which opened up moral questions about human rights and misuse of authority. Globally, theater audiences became conscious that they were microcommunities of their cultures. The reason to be part of a performance, given the triad of text-actor-audience, was to address these moral questions and be offered some options for change.

In 1968, discussing the possibilities that theater presented for assuaging the incoherence of modern life, the British director Jonathan Miller argued that "human beings are defined by being

capable of adding to themselves and transforming themselves through culture into something new in each generation" (9). Performance is, by its nature, a transforming event. The creative value of each new path depends on two factors: (1) on the artist-traveler making the choice, and (2) on the audience's acceptance or rejection of this choice. The performance, or text and actor in unison, brings to light questions of moral responsibility which play upon the audience. The audience reacts, and so the choices inherent to free will open up, feeding back to the actor on stage, to the text that takes a new direction to the culture at large. We shall see this creative triad of text-actor-audience in the plays under consideration. It is this rush of transformative options that marks the theater cultures of 1968-1971 that I'm considering here.

In the 1960s, theater in the powerful First World looked to the renascent Third World (so called by Parisian theater directors and other members of the intelligentsia) for new performance ideas committed to dignifying the individual within a culture. The First World sought out ritual acts as expression of human transformative possibilities. Directors from Europe, Britain, and the United States traveled worldwide to take ritual out of its own house and place it on European stages. In particular, Paris was the marketplace for Third World ritual objects. But Paris was also the marketplace for new European/Western theater, and Third World directors took back to their own countries ideas gleaned from this market. In this paper I look at two non-Western theaters emerging from Western political domination. I look at post-Civil War (i.e., post-1960) theater from Nigeria (a tribally divisive fragment of the once powerful and unified Mali empire) and Brazilian theater from São Paulo and Rio whose audience was in subservience to American business. Both civilizations have struggled to separate colonial culture from their authentic culture and to find some means to bind and authenticate what is their own. Theater has played an important part in these choices toward self-validation. As an adventure into universal theater, I also look at Peter Brook's misguided forays into Nigeria. He thought he could bring an essential language of liberation from civilization to the Nigerian villagers by using birdcalls and patterns in nature. It was Brook who changed as a result, after realizing that transcendence over situated human error is already built into the earliest Yoruba ideology and is expressed in their ritual. He returned to the crossroads of Paris inspired with the art of possession by the supernatural.

We are tempted to see myth as the ur-text of all theater and tragedy as a universal moralizing lesson relevant to all cultures, but the crossroads concept as it functions in non-Western societies veers away from the Western myth's fatalism and vengeful deities. The non-Western crossroads concept—for example, the one that we find in Yoruba tradition and in Brazilian Carnival—replaces the idea of destiny with mischievous gods, tricksters, and sexual and comic figures who try the individual's capacity for resistance. African theater, dating back to the Sundiata epic of the founding of the Mali empire around the thirteenth century, and performed by

griots since that time, enjoys a long history of comic provocateurs, both human and superhuman. Carnival, an overlay of Christian ritual onto African polytheism, is a celebration of rites of renewal and the renewal of the multiple beliefs and histories of the Brazilian population. The audience participates fully in the performance, even creating dramatic energy by yelling, laughing, singing, dancing in support of the actors' conflicts. The theatrical event in Nigeria is called a "concert party," as the audience is party to the outcome in concert with the actors. Barber, Ricard, and Collins write that concert parties reached their greatest importance in the 1960s and 1970s, but are now on the wane. In the introduction to *West African Popular Theatre*, they lament the decline precisely because now the popular audience is muted again: "it does not seem possible that the enormous imaginative energy of these theatres and their audiences could simply evaporate (or be silenced)" (54). This decline of audience participation is seen worldwide since then; for instance Brazilian Carnival is highly commercialized and tourist oriented, but the Brazilian population turns away.

This was not the case in the 60s. For example, Augusto Boal set up concert party events in the slums of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, performing historical myths of modern-day relevance with an acting troupe made up of audience members and trained actors. A very popular example was *Arena contra Zumbí* (or *Arena Theater against Zumbi*), in which the historical tyrant Zumbi was played by an actor, but the other personages were drawn from the audience. They made up their own lines, mixing their own situation with the historical revolutionaries to try to exorcise the tyrant and their own devils. The actor playing Zumbi had to make on-the-spot choices of dialogue. It is this theme of individual choice in moral dilemmas that joins both the non-Western concept and the Western concept of crossroads. History reached a crossroads, became a site of reflection on relations between young and old, between hope and fear, and between text and performance. In many theater cultures of the time, it was at the moment of first rehearsals that the text was desacralized and deconstructed to find meaning relevant to the young, agitated audience. No matter how venerable or valuable the text, it had been layered with histories of acting techniques, political associations, audience responses, and stagecraft. Authenticity, whatever the playwright intended and however the original performance may have been enacted, was long lost.

In the search for such authenticity, Polish and Soviet laboratory theater of the 1950s and 1960s turned both inward and outward, into individual motivation and individual reception of outside social, political, and cultural forces. For example, Jerzy Grotowski's training exercises for the actor concentrated on eliminating all personal impediments such as experience, inherited affects, and cultural mores (see Baumrin's essay in this volume). The body was used as a shell, a housing device for energy and sensation. Individual identity—how one does or does not fit into one's surroundings—was negated. The Polish and Russian laboratories of the 1950s and 1960s—Konstantin Stanislavski, Jerzy Grotowski,

and the Odin Teatret of Eugenio Barba—emphasize the actor's encounter with the text, and the use of the text to encounter the audience, each encounter a crossroads. Grotowski makes explicit the creativity in this encounter: "The theatre is an act engendered by human reactions and impulses, by contacts between people" (56). This confrontational, crossroads quality of theater is also seen in Antonin Artaud's Theater of Cruelty (newly discovered in this period) and in troupes like the Living Theater and Peter Brook's theater research company. All were based in Paris at times between 1968 and 1971. Julian Beck and Judith Malina's Living Theater relocated in Paris after tax problems in the United States; their particular style of acting and confrontational audience participation traveled to Brazil in 1967. The reviews were mixed but their effectiveness in staging the impossible affected the Brazilian Teatro Oficina to change their acting techniques and audience outreach (see Callaghan's essay in this volume). International theater festivals in France, Canada, England, Brazil, and on the two coasts of the United States exposed new audiences to old and new theater practices from around the world. Vaudeville began to rise again worldwide, traveling through villages and cities in small theater troupes. Taking theater to the audience, shocking them into attention and participation, meant taking the theater out of conventional venues and performing in public places, crossroads. Performances were a site of departure into unknown territories, both geographical and psycho-sociological. The voyages led to Africa, to South America, to Asia, to Eastern Europe and to North America. At the center of this global crossroads, the space of indeterminacy and choice, was the grand marketplace of Paris.

Paris as Crossroads

"It is no coincidence that all new forms of expression in all the arts should be centered in Paris. . . .Paris was a powerhouse, a magnet" for seekers of change in the 1960s (Esslin 26). The magnetism of Paris drew from worldwide trends in theatrical experimentation. Directors, actors, playwrights, even companies in full production were attracted to Paris because of its iconoclastic aesthetic. The Theater of the Absurd, the Theater of Cruelty, Bertolt Brecht's epic theater, and non-language theater such as Marcel Marceau's mime, were started in Paris in the post-World War I years, and by the end of World War II became expressions of populations worldwide trying to unearth themselves from the rubble of political defeat. Jean Jacquot in *Les voies de la creation théâtrale I* argues that experimental theater from Eastern and Western Europe and the United States met in Paris between 1967 and 1969 because of the student revolutionary climate. Jacquot engages with new European productions that were especially valued by students: Grotowski's *Le Prince Constant*; Barba's *Kaspariana*; the Living Theater's *Mysteries*, *The Brig*, and *Paradise Now*; and the Open Theater's *The Serpent*. In Paris, two lines of political defiance were staged after the war, lines supported by revolutionary students and

other intellectuals. One line belonged to Brecht's reevaluation of the individual within a faceless society, the epic line. The other line belonged to Artaud. Artaud's theories of cruelty found new purchase in the mid-60s, articulating that people—the audience—needed to be shocked out of their political apathy by illogic and senselessness in order to take a position of choice. Absurdist theater (Ionesco, for example) devalued language, devalued social dialogue, devalued anything that resembled civilized human acts in favor of grotesque, ridiculous performance. These two lines presented options against an oppressive, power-hungry, and violent worldwide political situation, enabling a re-imagining of basic assumptions about the human capability to resist and to be creative.

Though these experimental programs received close scrutiny in Paris, I have been impressed with the similarity and simultaneity of experimental elements coming from more remote Third World cultures such as Africa, the Caribbean, and South America. At the same time, both Brechtian and Artaudian theater were being performed in the most politically oppressed countries, particularly Brazil and Nigeria. However, such performances came with a difference. Translators rewrote the texts; directors changed those translated texts to meet the audience on their own cultural grounds; actors incorporated techniques developed by Stanislavski and Grotowski, techniques not necessarily appropriate to the epic and cruel lines of resistance. For example, in São Paulo from 1967 to 1971, Boal's Teatro Arena used the Brechtian model of performing historical events with audience participation in songs, only in this case the historical event was a Brazilian event, not German as in Brecht. At the same period, José Corrêa Celso's Teatro Oficina was interlacing Brecht and other European revolutionary plays by Jean-Paul Sartre, Max Frisch and Maxim Gorki with the new Brazilian protest theater. The Absurdist Theater of Eugène Ionesco, Alfred Jarry, and Samuel Beckett was translated and staged for an admiring audience educated in European culture and fascinated by new stage technologies. In Nigeria, Wole Soyinka and the Ibadan University Theater staged Georges Feydeau, Nikolai Gogol, Maxim Gorki and Bertolt Brecht in English translation for academic audiences. At the same time in the outskirts of Ibadan, mammy-wagons (with a distinct parallel to Brecht's *Mother Courage* set) brought vaudeville and political satire to village audiences. Some director-playwrights, in particular the subject of this paper Femi Osofisan, bridged the academic audience and the popular audience in ever-expansive theater projects (Barber 32).

Bearing in mind that theater is a mirror of social problems and of political answers, the performances from Nigeria and Brazil coming to Paris were assumed by audiences to be reflections of their histories and social practices. French critics found these performances exotic. Bernard Dort, in the program notes for the 1968 Paris performance of *O Rei da Vela,* which I will examine later, warned "our vanguard audience" (i.e., Parisians) that the performance was grotesque historical realism which portrays the "gangrenous cadav-

er of Brazil" in grossly comic terms meant to shake up Brazilian audiences (qtd. in Peixoto 163). He ends the notes with a sly reference to a sterility in Western theater that does not have the insurrectional potential of Brazil because it hasn't the cause for insurrection (Ibid., 163). He invites the French public to meet Third World theater at the crossroads; even so, the overarching tone is that of a Westerner confronting his "other."

The crossroads is also a meeting place where ideas are exchanged. Eugenio Barba, the Italian director of the Polish/Norwegian Odin Teatret, called this exchange a "barter," by which he meant an exchange of theatrical skills. Barba referred his company's acquisition of exotic skills learned in Brazil, Japan, Bali, Haiti, and India as "putting on" and "taking off" skins of ritual technique (Barba 7). A more cynical term, "a supermarket of culture," was applied to the 1969 Avignon Festival by Judith Malina of the Living Theater, but she was angry at the French administrative decision to charge admission—a "bunch of hippies" decried the Avignon administration who wanted their costs repaid (Jacquot 244). Actually, Malina was prescient in equating the globalization thrust of international festivals with a market mentality. By the 1990s, Western theater's moves toward the global had become ruled by the laws of the market. Value of an aesthetic experience was measured by the money put into the production and by house receipts. Good theater became expensive theater. However, 1968 Paris, the magnetic pole for an avant-garde that sought new forms of political liberation as well as aesthetic iconoclasm, turned into a bartering place, a crossroads for an entire world in upheaval.

In Africa, theater as "barter" involves fusing the audience with the actors, fusing spirits or gods with humans through ritual, fusing the powerful sky with the limits of the present horizon. Money is not the object. Chinua Achebe says that without crossroads, without a place to barter, there is no hope of changing the present, no hope of a future (Achebe 2931). These new horizons for audiences under political repression applied most urgently to Nigeria and Brazil because of their civil wars and repressive governments. Their theatrical experiments had built up a head of steam, as seen in the figures of Augusto Boal, Roberto Schwarz, Ferreira Gullar, and Celso from São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, and in the figures of Soyinka, Christopher Okigbo, J.P. Clark, and Osofisan from Ibadan, Nigeria. By 1971, many of these directors and playwrights had taken political refuge in Paris, adding to the crossroads effect. What Brazilian and Nigerian theater communities had in common besides a repressive political state and an oppressed citizenry was a profound sense of ritual, which was used to their own benefit, but which also excluded foreigners and foreign interventions because of its cultural situatedness. This exclusion tantalized anthropology-minded researchers and theater directors like Brook who needed new material for inspiration. They expected to exchange their Western myth-based theater for a different audience response and different venues, as well as different options. On the other hand, they thought their Western theater held universal truths compre-

hensible to non-Western audiences through dramatic action, despite language barriers. As I shall show later, African and Brazilian audiences saw no universal truths coming from these performances. Curiosity about outsiders brought them to the performance. The analogy to visiting a bazaar or marketplace held true for these audiences, but there was no real exchange, no barter besides the monetary. Their own ritual-based theater answered most of their moral questions.

Paris as Bartering Place

In the 60s, Paris witnessed a period of International Theater Festivals, competitions, and government-sponsored invitations to troupes across the globe. Jean-Louis Barrault's Odéon Théâtre de France hosted companies from the U.S., Spain, Germany, Poland, Greece, and Africa. The Théâtre des Nations and ORTF held symposia on new forms of theater. ORTF, along with Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRF), and the newly formed Centre for International Theater Research (CIRT) were the Parisian bases of theatrical experimentation, self-designated "laboratories." These laboratory companies were sharing ideas and attending each other's workshops and performances. In Paris, the public as audience was less important than the exchange of information about acting techniques, production, and textual reshaping. However, to accommodate this flurry of experiments, little theaters opened all over Paris: café theaters, black boxes, old cinema halls, warehouses, parks, and street intersections. That these venues also operated as student protest stages and labor union meeting places (the Odéon and the Théâtre de Angevilliers are two examples) only confirmed this escalating matrix of crossroads.

Confirming his reputation as a virtuoso explorer of Western myth, Brook brought a British National Theater production of Seneca's *Oedipus* to the Odéon in 1967 as part of a French government series of Theater of Cruelty "Intimidation by the Classics" productions. Celso came twice; once in 1966 to research bringing Brecht back to Brazil, and again as part of a festival competition in the upheaval of May 1968, this time with an absurdist piece from the Brazilian modernist repertory, Oswald de Andrade's *O Rei da Vela*. The young Osofisan followed the path of Soyinka, who was driven into political exile because of his rebellious writings and plays. Osofisan came to Paris to study French theater at Paris III in 1971. Disappointed with the academic program, he dropped out to work with the actor-director Jean-Marie Serreau. Serreau wore three hats as director, placing him in a unique crossroads situation. In the late 1950s, his company was the first to present Beckett and Ionesco alongside Brecht in the Latin Quarter of Paris, exposing students to the first expression of liberation theater. He was involved in the new idea of "happenings," an early form of performance art that involved the audience at critical moments, such as in Arrabal's *Picque Nique* (Jacquot 311). Then, in the mid-1960s, he began directing and producing revolutionary theater

from Africa and the Caribbean with both black and white actors. He called it "Third World Theater." Osofisan worked with him on Bernard Dadié's *Béatrice du Congo*. Serreau also directed and acted in film projects with an eye to the human comedy of Paris. By his death in 1973, he was working on camera-as-audience/camera-as-narrator techniques in film, which Marcel Carné had introduced in *Les Enfants du paradis* during the German occupation.

Incidentally, *Les Enfants* is a testament to theatrical experimentation during political repression and was a key moment in the formation of the 60s crossroads moment. Its audience-incorporation techniques (camera as covert witness and especially the use of performed character types) were fundamental to the theater experiments of 1968-71. The film was made in 1943, during another moment of political repression, and the script was made piecemeal, like a television show, perhaps to avoid censorship, but certainly because the climate in occupied Paris was paranoid. The site of the film's performance was the literal crossroads (or *carrefours*) of the Barrière de Ménilmontant, the zone outside central Paris where Parisians of all quartiers encountered each other and mixed, even during the Occupation. This geographical crossroads, besides being a site of social interchange, was also a site of "symbolic or ritual acts" (Forbes 26) and was used as such by students and other revolutionaries in May 1968. The film continued to set a standard for avant-garde techniques in Parisian theater throughout the 60s in non-verbal communication (mime), in the use of the distant voyeur, in serialized narrative, and character types. For example, the homosexual was viewed as a gender type, a person not caught in the dialectic of normal male-female desire, a walking crossroads. Likewise, the languages of the film bounced from street talk to gestural communication—another set of options opening. The theme of "street urchins known not just as streetwise rascals but also for their radicalism, unsullied innocents and vanguard revolutionaries" (Forbes 71) resounded in the revolutionary ethos of 1968. Abstract values were personified, made into choices. Truth appeared in the nude: "Come and look at truth dressed only in herself" (Forbes 38). Even the two-part form was revolutionary. Part one projects back to the Revolution of 1789, recreating history as a myth and political device. Part two is a deluded reflection on a past that never existed, but that had more truth in it because of a desire to create new options, something meaningful. Part two of *Les Enfants* relates directly to Third World theater of the late 1960s, the need to both create a meaningful history and a promise of a future free from political repression. Osofisan's oeuvre since his Paris study has dealt with "boons," promises of future. In Brazil, the desire to create history out of imaginary figments is at the heart of Brazilian *saudade* and is clearly seen in the Tropicalismo movement, including act two of *O Rei da Vela*. In the Western theater, emerging from the conservative social order of the 1950s, nudity on stage, homosexuality as non-desire, mime, acts of prostitution, and the serialization of love encounters became real options on stage; these were already forecast in *Les Enfants du paradis*.

Comedy also served as crossroads. Comedy requires innocence on the part of the audience, an innocence to suspend reason and let chance work things out. Comic structure builds to a crisis out of individual dissembling and social chaos, and then resolves in a life-affirming finale. At essence, this form of theater expresses the generative energy of common people faced with life's ordeals. This is the fundament of mime, and of clowning more generally, a fundament to which a popular audience can respond. Even in the Theater of Cruelty, many of Artaud's theories about the Absurd change tragic texts from unmitigated violence to comedy. Brecht uses comic jests, often from the chorus. These jests are biting, deflating the main characters' sense of importance. This direction toward jesting and comedic catharsis (from high to low standing) is also built into African Yoruba theater and into Boal's *coringa* theater.

Globally, comedy is associated with creative outcomes and is often associated with sexual acts. Two of the plays under consideration in this paper perform sexual transgression and have comic endings. Femi Osofisan's play *Esu and the Vagabond Minstrels* is subtitled *a Fertility Rite for the Modern Stage*. It ends with the audience and actors joined in a liberation chorus, a rite of renewal. Oswald de Andrade's play *O Rei da Vela* concludes ecstatically with sex and death for the King of Candles. Even the most solemn tragedy, like that of Seneca's *Oedipus*—which arrived in Paris in May 1968 at the same time as Celso's refiguration of *O Rei da Vela*—was transformed into a comic Theater of the Absurdist rite byTed Hughes and Brook. While Esslin noted how much Brook's and Hughes's Happening owed to Artaud's obsession with magic (qtd. in Williams 121), Jonathan Miller dismissed the whole chaos with one term, "Ludicrous Rex" (7). He said that in its ludic design and its attempts to stir up audience response, the production overpowered Seneca's poetic text. He failed to notice that one myth of the crossroads had been replaced by another.

Exploration of Ritual

In December 1972, Peter Brook set out on a tour through North and West Africa to perform *The Conference of the Birds*, intending to use birdcalls as a universal language. Two decades earlier, Brecht had shared with Brook his desire for a new audience for which he would have staged a Theater of Naiveté, (had he lived past 1956). Brecht may have been referring to the anomie of a wartorn European bourgeoisie, an audience that needed reinvigorating by becoming children again. Brook's interpretation of "naiveté" was definitely childlike, exploiting wide-eyed wonder both on the actor's part and in the audience. A French actor from his CIRT group, François Marthouret, explained Brook's concept as "committing oneself totally to reinventing totally what you're in the process of doing: inventing without cheating" (qtd. in Williams 236). Brook imagined the African village audiences to be the model of childlike naiveté, in that they were innocent of Western

theatrical mechanisms. Brook's theory was that words in any language were restrictive, that acrobatics and physical encounters on stage would express the sense of play he ascribed to children, and by extension to Africans (Williams 205). Brook opened his performances with a common object, like a shoe or box, thrown into the staging arena, and an actor would improvise responses to that object in slapstick, playing with the audience's innocence and willing suspension of disbelief. The result he hoped for in this experiment was that "theater would at last become a truly popular art open to everyone. It would make total sense, regardless of language or class, wherever in the world it was played" (qtd. in Heilpern 16).

In that mode of expectation, he took off to Nigeria with a partial script of Ted Hughes's, who at the last moment refused to go. The intent was to absorb the savannah noises of Nigeria and to use only those in a script that followed a Sufi myth. Finally, there was no script, just an outline with strange onomatopoeic screeches Hughes imagined African birds would emit. The actors had to improvise sounds and action from the outline. Sometimes, Brook would give out a sequence of sounds without line breaks so that the actors were forced to construct a form. From the account of John Heilpern, the few performances were nothing but chaos, formlessness, and embarrassment. An audience of bush children beat the actors with sticks to drum some life and meaningful communication into them. The adult audience at the University of Ibadan responded with silence, a let's-get-this-over- with silence. Heilpern called the experience "the impossible mystery tour" (17), a reference to the Beatles Magical Mystery Tour of 1967. No one understood anyone else in the text-actor-triad; the magic of bird songs roused no emotional response, and the CIRT actors went crazy trying to mimic birds, especially birds of Africa that had no reference in European culture. The Nigerian audiences had no idea what was being performed, so they remained silent. Other disasters emerged with Nigerian audiences who misunderstood the comedy—for example, an actor trampling an old loaf of bread was seen as vulgar waste in a village of famine—but despite these miscommunications there were magical moments of exchange, what Brook called a "paratheatrical experience" where "we met their hearts" (qtd. in Williams 207).

Brook and the CIRT troupe picked up masking techniques, the play of shared history between griots and audience, and otherworldly movements that they bartered for a tighter narrative organization. One of the Yoruba chiefs expressed the importance of this exchange: "Each tribe has its own small number of movements, which it can do again and again. But we never learn other movements, ones that are not part of our tradition. We do not even know that they exist" (qtd. in Brook 160). For Brook, the performances were an exchange he delighted in, but as Heilpern pointed out, "for all his natural instincts, [Brook] forgets that spirits laugh too" (274). His high seriousness, his style or artiness, created distance between stage and audience. What he needed to dis-

cover was openness and a language of naiveté where any transformation is possible, logically or illogically. Yoruba magic transformation of an individual into a human-type deity or an animal deity was a supreme form of acting, one he wanted to emulate back in Paris with his CIRT ensemble. As described by John Heilpern,

> [t]he Yoruba remains himself. But he "becomes" his god. So the actor takes on the challenge of a role that is greater than himself. The role is his god. The actor stretches himself to his fullest height, until the role he plays enters every pore in his body. He "becomes" his role. Then we witness something that happens rarely in theater. The actor will be completely at one with the role he plays. He understands exactly what he's doing. But he will be possessed (247).

This transformation of actor into a character of supernatural or universal qualities is what the Brazilian Boal has worked on in his concepts of the Theater of the Oppressed and Games for Actors. Boal, who worked with both the Arena and Oficina theaters in the late 60s, had formed an acting "laboratory" in São Paulo in which his actors discovered and practiced ritual behaviors drawn from the Brazilian populace. Because of political oppression in Brazil, Boal moved his Theater of the Oppressed to Paris in 1971. His published works on ritual acting techniques included *Latin American Techniques in Popular Theater* and *Games for Actors and Non-Actors* that are summarized in his recent publication *Rainbow of Desire*. Boal urged actors and audience to fuse in a cathartic experience, such as that seen in Carnival in Rio. Through the mirroring of ritualistic movements, Boal tests the actor's resistance to an exterior force. Either the actor loses self-control and is subsumed by the other, or the actor resists and remains different. With his wife, a psychologist, Boal has explored the ritual aspects of madness, violence, and psychological oppression by producing theater in mental institutions in Brazil and in Paris. Recently, his techniques on resistance have been adopted by Performing Theater Workshops in West Africa, especially in traveling village theater. Another Brazilian pedagogue in the liberation of the oppressed, Paulo Freire, has been influential in Nigerian theater playwriting, especially at the University Theater level where Osofisan operates (see Irele xxiii). Both Boal and Freire work extensively with ritual and its place in revitalizing identity formation.

Ritual partly derives from the word "rite," a repetitive action meant to bring together a community. There is another aspect of ritual, however, that belongs to fusing the supernatural to humans. This is often ecstatic and transcendental. Nigerian and Brazilian theater encouraged this ecstasy in its popular audience, but the magic didn't work on the intellecutal class. That changed in the late 1960s when an explosion in culturual anthropology and an interest in behavioral processes of "undiscovered" and "yet-to-be-invented" cultures were carried into the theater in text and per-

formance.

Richard Schechner claims that the theatrical avant-garde of the late sixties had five faces. Two of these I take as interesting to this study. One face turned to Asia primarily for discovery of the inner, transcendental, mythical self and its behaviors; the other face turned to the technological future for innovative ideas (multimedia, light shows, television, popular entertainment). Into the first face, the tradition-seeking face, Schechner collapses ritual, magic and the "wisdom of the ages" (Schechner 11). The second face of the avant-garde is apocalyptic, a technology that "obliterates even as it liberates" (11). Theater of the second face is violent, grotesque, often erotic. The plays under consideration in this paper draw on both faces. In Paris, theater laboratories and small experimental theaters staged reinterpretations of Greek myth and Shakespeare with the goal of audience catharsis, using ecstasy as a communal force and technology for its shock value. They also staged performed violence from the Third World, again with audience catharsis in mind. Roads of ritual enactment came from Brazil and Nigeria in particular. Moreover, by 1968, Brazil's Tropicalismo movement and Nigeria's new university theater (Soyinka's and later Osofisan's Orisun company) had revitalized their indigenous ritual/theatrical practices toward a new, exciting, shocking theatrical moment of high technology and communal engagement. It is to these movements that I now turn.

There is a cultural element in ritual that is shared between Brazil and Nigeria, cultures built on a wealth of ancestral spirits present in everyday life and a history of cultural disempowerment due to economic and political oppression from outside. In Brazil and all of Africa, the 1960s were a traumatic period of recapturing national energy, a recapturing that resulted in boom and bust years. The systemic dysfunction of Third World nations, large and small, was due to political gerrymandering and to annual overthrows of whatever government had just grabbed power. Stability and a sense of communal self were constantly threatened, to the point that common people turned to religion. African and Brazilian religions, as expressed through group ritual, are magic-based, closely tied to nature and to ancestral spirits, and show no sense of color distinction. In Brazil, until the late 1960s, this representation of racial equality within ritual appeared only in Carnival but was absent from the theater.

The 1960s politicized racial inequality in all cultures of the world; theater was one venue for the argument. In theater, masking, communal energy and magic ritual acts drove the argument out onto the table. It had to be addressed. Theater also provided some solutions, in acting techniques such as Serreau's mixed-race casts and in the texts. As I will show in the next section, the playwright Femi Osofisan proposed a solution to racial/cultural inequality by bonding people in compassion. Bonding in the text or bonding in a group performance, or even bonding actors to audience against the outside, was a power used in this theater. Judith Malina noted in the Living Theater's 1967 Paris production

of *The Brig* that "each actor denies personal freedom in order to enter into compassion with neighbor…to train passions, and submit to cosmic order…[while] the guardians of law and order are dehumanized and left out of the loop of compassion" (Jacquot 189).

Nigerian Crossroads Theater

Compassion is a basis for Femi Osofisan's play *Esu and the Vagabond Minstrels*. The epigram to *Esu*, "Principles are needed in great matters. Compassion suffices in the small," is from Albert Camus, whom Osofisan studied during his research into French theater at Paris III. Osofisan returned from Paris in 1974 to create a new theater that would "invent new relationships and experience unknown emotions" (Richards 117). However, his fundamental form is that of the Yoruba traveling theater with immediate access to Yoruba ritual. *Esu*'s form is that of a concert party, while his aesthetic content and acting techniques are derived from his experiences in Paris. Osofisan and Wole Soyinka have quarreled over the place and importance of myth and ritual in African theater. Soyinka believes that myth is at the basis of all human activity, and ritual is the enactment of myth. Osofisan views ritual as "a mirror of what we do and fail to do" (qtd. in Irele xxxv). In other words, it is social practice. In Yoruba theater, ritual is a "strategy of negotiation" between actors, gods, and the audience, an extension of the processes of communal life in a stylized dramatic form (Richards 76). A mannered, often grotesque technique with masks, on-stage changes of costume, and other *trompe l'oeil* maneuvers puzzles the audience and invites unlayering. They respond physically—laughing, singing, taunting, even beating the performers, as we saw earlier in Brook's mishap. Osofisan himself has remarked on the variety of endings for *Esu*, often contradictory, which have taken shape during the moment of performance because of the audience's critical response.

Esu and the Vagabond Minstrels: A Fertility Cycle for the Modern Stage was written during Osofisan's conflicted professorship at the University of Benin. His reputation for social radicalism, picked up from theater studies with Jean-Marie Serreau in Paris (1971-1973) and intensified during post-doctoral research on the origins of West African theater in 1974, caused him to leave Benin and to yet again follow the path of Soyinka, first at Ife and then as director-playwright at the University of Ibadan. *Esu* has the distinction of being the longest running production in Nigerian Theater history, and in 1984 it was the winner of the Nigerian Authors' prize. A reconstruction of an earlier play *Once upon Four Robbers* (which is set in a marketplace and deals with urban violence), here shows how Osofisan incorporated his African research in ritual and audience engagement and also the more European themes of rebellion against civil structures which, he writes, "takes us daily farther and farther away from our humanity" (34). His ideological perspective

on the evils of power coupled with man's capability to destroy these evils has been set out in poetry, plays, essays, and critiques. Like Brecht, Osofisan puts the underbelly of society on display as a mirror image of the power class. Like Artaud, he finds creativity in the illogical.

Esu mixes Western and non-Western aesthetics in its setting, in acting techniques, in its serial form, and in its use of three of the Nigerian languages: Pidgin, Yoruba, and English. The serial form, which he may have bartered from *Les Enfants du paradis*, determines the form of the dramatic situation: four episodes, entitled "Orchestra," "Overture," "Opium," "Hangover." Within each episode, several characters are introduced in sequence and are presented with their own dilemma to resolve. In Brechtian style, choral songs begin and end each episode. The actors are first masked as gods and then unmasked as humans. Audience members, seated in a circle around the central crossroads shrine, get up when possessed to dance, sing, and be part of the party.

The crossroads metaphor takes on visual presence in this one-set play. As in *Les Enfants*, the crossroads are extra-*muros*, outside of town, and a site of ritual offerings. Five unemployed actors (minstrels) meet Esu, the Yoruba god of indeterminacy, at the crossroads. The imaginary paths emanating from the crossroads lead to a marketplace, a sacred grove, a town, and a river. Esu, in disguise as an old man, offers the vagabond troupe "boons": any wish they have will be granted if they will save another human from despair. The cures are episodic and serial, without a final reward or closure. Each character has two levels of existence—that of the professional minstrel and that of an ordinary member of society—and these are in conflict. One girl, Jigi, wishes to rise from the gutter; however, she must dance erotically to earn her living, "to see powerful monarchs grovel as they watch" (76). Her poetic self-disgust at her own performances parallels her disgust at the politics of a starving city that prostitutes itself for wealth:

> Road of business
> Opens wide for lions,
> Road of money
> Narrows down for rabbits;
> ……..
> Money, husband of men!
> Announce my name—Jigi Aro!
> And bend and ripple—to my rhythm
> My beads are jingling…
> You dance in the blood, like fire,
> The fire of battle, you pretty soldier,
> You eat our insides, like a hunger,
> The hunger of Lagos, town of riches! (77)

In fact, the man she is saving is a city administrator who wants to commit suicide because he killed the royal python to "liberate [his people] from superstition" (75), but instead brought shame onto his

head. Jigi, the actress, sees that her sexy dancing can restore his desire to live. Compassion for the plight of another human and by extension compassion for the human race is at the heart of this magic boon play. It is magic because it brings together gods and man, human and human, in a promise of a life worth living despite violence and suffering. Resistance to the political regime is clearly urged here and follows the previous statement of Judith Malina of the Living Theater: "The guardians of law and order are dehumanized and left out of the loop of compassion" (qtd. in Jacquot 189). In his introduction to *Esu*, Osofisan calls on the rite of fertility to create "sheer sensual ecstasy" in audience and actor alike, to "contradict, and compensate, these images of brutality and violence that fill our daily life" (35).

The New Theater of Brazil – Tropicalismo

In 1966, from the predominantly Afro-Brazilian community of northern Brazil, Tropicalismo burst into the São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro theater scene in music, art, and theater. The radical movement took classics and parodied them, and it brought together the most radical artists of the time to create something "marginal" to social taste. Tropicalismo's effort to look ahead for new solutions and to shock the audience into a critical view of their past and present was the goal taken on by Teatro Oficina. In a program of 1966, Oficina explained their purpose:

> Our business is to realize a living theater, taken directly from national reality. We believe in the need for a truthful dialogue between the play and the public. And it is essential that the dialogue be over the most pressing problems, most contradictions, in our daily life. Our daily work is research, experimentation, a certainty that each day we will come across a new idea, even with risk of going backwards and starting again everything that seems to us wrong, useless or false (Peixoto 144).

Up to 1968, upper-class Brazilians accepted the falsehood that prejudice on color grounds did not exist in twentieth-century Brazil. In fact, the original Oswald de Andrade play under consideration makes no point of color; the characters are "white" Portuguese petty bourgeoisie. Tropicalismo destroyed this color line. In the 1968 reinterpretation by José Celso and the Teatro Oficina, all the dualities and false pretensions of "white" Brazilian society were blown open and exposed. Celso asserts that theater worldwide, but especially Brazilian theater, needed the "mythical and cultural richness of black culture's resistance" (qtd. in Peixoto 199). Color, class, and sexuality became problematic in this shocking performance. The shock value came from a surge of vitality in Brazilianness, in what was unique to the nation as a whole, standing isolated from European control.

Tropicalismo reinvested the authentic Brazilian in a performance of his own history and ritual in music, art, and theater. Much of that history was unpleasant to see, as in the export of bananas and coffee, gems and trees, and the import of false fashions. A condemnation of this unequal exchange is the first layer of the Tropicalismo movement, and it is handled by parody, embarrassing to the audience. For instance, the music of Caetano Veloso parodied U.S. pop music, rock and roll, electric folk, and the Beatles, since they were the leading import in the 1960s. But at the heart of this parody is a deep attachment to the original Brazilian form of music, the *samba*, which expresses the cultural ritual of oppression and relief. In this spirit of exposing the false aesthetic (usually imported) and revitalizing the creative, resistant character of the Brazilian, the reimagined performance of *O Rei da Vela* by Teatro Oficina utilized the theater techniques of Grotowski, Brecht, and Artaud, along with ritual acts (transformation, possession, sexual transgression) and objects derived from African—particularly Yoruban—theater.

As seen with Grotowski's theater and with Brook and Boal, the business of theater is to bring the audience into the argument, to engage them and move them toward open dialogue. Only one play exists from the short-lived Tropicalismo moment (torture and exile of artists shut it down in 1971), and that play is the 1937 *O Rei da Vela* of Oswald de Andrade who died in 1954 without having any of his plays performed. Theater historian Fred M. Clark considers *O Rei* a vanguard text, using all the technological innovations and revolutionary socialism of the European theater of the 1930s. Brazilian censors would not have allowed *O Rei* to be staged at any rate, because the government was "desperately trying to save the coffee aristocracy and nurture a growing middle class in the cities" (16). The censors would not even allow the word "lover" to be said on stage, let alone fierce caricatures of the dreaded homosexual and lascivious behavior which ran in a middle class trying to emulate Europe, Paris in particular. It was a piece of parodic absurdity written in 1937, but an absurdity that looks toward a grim future. The 1967 Tropicalismo revision, by contrast, was messianic, apocalyptic in Schechner's definition of the avant-garde.

The presentation of *O Rei da Vela* at Avignon and in Paris in 1968 drew a great uproar from French theater critics and audiences. The French saw an outrageous parody of a moribund society. Brazilian Tropicalismo held a mirror up to the Brazilian petty bourgeoisie to shock them out of their absurd replications of tawdry European rituals. One example of absurd ritual is the salon visit of Perdigoto, the fascist colonel who tries to persuade the Candle King Abelard that "peace will return under the old regime" while "crows will eat the rebels" (Andrade 146). What was a warning about Hitler Youth in 1937 became a rallying cry for artists and leftists in 1968 to strike and get out. Some French audiences, including critics, tried to distance themselves from the simulacra of their own old regime. The exposure of gender taboos, of class hypocrisy uncovered from

layers of politesse, concerned the French critics as a replication of their own history. Emile Copfermann wrote in *Les Lettres Françaises,* May 15, 1968, that the homosexuality flaunted on stage resulted in a sort of "social castration," and that this denunciation of a perversion of sexuality—alienated, commercialized—was curiously understood by some [French] spectators as its opposite (qtd. in Peixoto 165). He and other critics were troubled by the multiple and immediate responses of the French audiences, as if he were suffering a loss of critical control. There was no consensus about what they were seeing, whether it be exotic or a personal attack. The Oficina troupe brought their commentary to Paris to be evaluated as an experimental production which thrust Brazilian theater onto the world stage as creative and rebellious. Renato Borghi glowed with the possibilities for a French-Brazil career:

> May 10, 1968. We were an enormous success and if there hadn't been a revolution going on that very moment, I guarantee we would have made a regular career in Paris. Our objective parallels that of the students: they know that if they don't fight, now, already, for change, they'll be completely eaten up (qtd. in Alvarez Lima 97).

However, the director, José Celso, interviewed in 1968, claimed that his intentions were toward the Brazilian public, an attempt to shock them out of their *anomie* in a performance of their own history:

> What is really new in Rei da Vela is a style of direction which speaks through masks, minimum props, interpretations, of the fact that young actors are creating the parts of mature characters. All this is a new option. All of us made Rei. We transformed a piece into our own commentary, extremely personal, intimate, on all of Brazilian reality (128).

With Celso and Borghi at the helm, Teatro Oficina began to separate from Boal's Teatro Arena in 1961, producing a variety of new European and American plays which were hot sellers in Europe. From Boal they had picked up Actor's Studio and Stanislavski experimental acting techniques, and had invited European-trained coaches to form a daily regime of ensemble techniques. However, Borghi says that the group was *apaixonado* (or "in love with") the idea of the totality of theater, including poetry, message, set design, character development, and audience education. This passion for the social effect of the text directed them toward Brecht and Russian social-commentary theater. When political repression on the arts tightened in Brazil in an attempt to salvage social stability, the ensemble became political. Celso traveled to Europe in 1965 to witness the avant-garde in action. He returned with experimental plays such as Maxim Gorki's *Enemies* and also with new forms

of theater such as the "documentary theater" of Brecht's *Poems and Songs*. Celso turned documentary theater into a particularly Brazilian spectacle, or *Show*, which brought together Brazil's most outstanding artists of song, poetry, and social criticism with full technical support and television coverage. The seeds of radical theater were strewn as a popular art, as Tropicalismo. Then came the censors, the fire that burned down their theater, but a fire that gave birth to the idea of producing a Brazilian satire where the message was obscured beneath layers of parodic posturing and fantastic set design. They worked to realize the radical intent of Oswald de Andrade: "to devour Brazil and vomit [it] up on stage, to not being afraid to think, not being afraid to say what you were thinking, even when that would raise hell. And it did raise hell. And the play allowed us as well to vomit up the dictatorship which we had been living with for three years" (qtd. in Peixoto 275).

The three-act structure is itself a parody of European romantic theater, of the kind often played to Brazilian audiences that considered themselves neo-romantic. All three acts unfurl in *boudoir* intimacy, a hangover from nineteenth-century bourgeois theater, but that cloistering is patently false. Actually, no one dares to venture out into public for fear of being unmasked, violated physically, and exposed as frauds. The Tropicalismo treatment exaggerated all aspects of fraudulence in high-tech set design and garish colors, windows leading out to tropical postcard views. No real people appear; everyone is acting a role, an abstraction of the Brazilian population. A principal actor, Borghi aligned himself with the Brazilian audience with the idea of "we are." His statement was printed in the first program in September 1967:

> What Brazilians feel in general is how they are obstinate, misinformed and mostly trained in a spirit of obedience, obedient to the colonizer, to the head of the factory, to the parish priest. We are a people without any tradition of truly popular revolution, incapable of critical solution, of any dynamic appraisal. Through a theater of violence, I believe that dialogue becomes possible (qtd. in Peixoto 154).

Like Osofisan's compassion statement, Borghi reaches across the proscenium to hold hands with the audience before launching a violent critique of Brazilian society. It is a crossroads that audience and actors encounter together.

Character development in the Tropicalismo version of *O Rei* had to come in rehearsal, following workshops in Stanislavski, Grotowski, and Brecht characterization. Brazilian theater didn't have a national dramaturgy or a national system of performance practice. Every production prior to Boal's experiments with Arena was derivative of European and American theater. Developing characters that speak to and speak of the Brazilian audience was the avenue taken by Celso and the Oficina ensemble. Borghi described the rehearsal process in 1966. His description of reality

work that flushed out the "working text" of *O Rei* follows:

> We imitated the behavior of people, of professions, of types. Behavior of the intellectuals of the moment, of the critics, film folks, all the gestures of them all. This gave us a huge feeling of freedom, improvising with elements of life, with concrete things, with a social stratum (qtd. in Peixoto 275).

It is hard to avoid noticing the resemblance of this improvisational work to the Parisian laboratories of Grotowski and Boal, and to the earlier boulevard work of *Les Enfants du paradis*. In September 1967, the opening night crowd was unaware of being satirized (George, *Modern* 97). Some did know immediately that this performance was going to change Brazilian theater, bring it at least up to the present, and some felt the sting of the avant-garde: "Circus, show, journalism and convention, everything is staged in this Oficina production—a spectacle destined to make history" (qtd. in Peixoto 168). The aggressive nature of Tropicalismo counted as many enemies as it did followers. Celso decided to try it out in Avignon and Paris in 1968. Celso wanted to join the world's experimental directors.

David George has written an extensive chapter on this unique interpretation of Oswald's modernist play, and he agrees with the French critics that the stereotypes of sexuality, indolence, and kitsch that Brazil exports so freely are not to be understood as parody. The parody fails, he says, because Brazilians *do* celebrate their stereotypes—in carnival, television, film, even in quotidian street life (George, *Modern* 104). A national identity is built on ritual acts that may be shocking to outsiders but that are enjoyable to Brazilians because of their uniqueness. In fact, their exported identity is theatrical; it is a determinate display of differences from those of the viewer. The high-tech, futuristic show of Tropicalismo resembles a fashion show where imagination and absurdity have free rein. Moreover, theater that exposes sexual obsession, ecstasy, madness, and societal fears uses the elements of the avant-garde of Paris: it is Theater of Aggression.

The avant-garde, once it has stung, loses its poison, so Borghi left Oficina in 1972 because, as he later said, it was an adventure that had become a "happening." Random shtick, random schlock, snippets of learned dances, acts, songs constituting a "happening." Oficina had formed an ensemble dedicated to an avant-garde aesthetic, the major point of which was to shock the audience and force a catharsis, but this too became dull. Celso finally closed the group down in 1981 after an unsuccessful attempt to film *O Rei da Vela*.

The Crossroads Effect in the Performance of History

This was an epic period in theater, but it did not lead to a universal theater as Brook had hoped. As discussed earlier in this

paper, Brook's failure to engage Nigerian audiences in a "universal" theater was due to a lack of comprehension, a lack of engagement between audience and stage. Universal theater abstracts culture to ideas which humanity shares in common. But global theater, as seen in relationships between First and Third World at this time, is an exchange, an exchange that may be lop-sided. In Brazil and Nigeria, it was a period of exploration of new performance techniques and unknown emotions between actor, text, and audience. Paris as crossroads witnessed the opening of global exchange, especially in the performance of a culture's history. Celso said that all theater is a performance of history, and that without the performance there is no sense of history or what makes us human.

Performing history necessitates two audiences: the first is the home audience which interacts with the text and actors in a triangular creation of a vital, ongoing culture. Brazil's Tropicalismo and Femi Osofisan's entire *oeuvre* engaged its home audience interactively. But who was the audience then? Young students and university persons already charged with the idea of revolution against the old guard. The second audience necessitated by the performance of history is the objective audience which looks at the performance as a didactic tool to learn about other cultures. The French critics for *O Rei* printed critical reviews about Brazilian culture more than about the theatrical content. But even within a culture, the home audience can be objective, affected intellectually, still unengaged. Much of the 1969 Parisian audience for Grotowski and Boal's experiments were objective and affected. According to the book *African Theatre in Development*, co-authored by Martin Banham, James Gibbs, and Osofisan, Performance Studio Workshops (PSWs) are the recent transformation of Yoruba traveling theater. These PSWs, adapted from Boal's 1960s *coringa* (or "jester") projects, go into rural communities with the purpose of raising awareness of "undeveloped" ways and giving the people choices in improving their lot. Performance topics range from AIDS to female genital mutilation to circumcision. The villagers, including children, are the actors, led by a jester figure, sometimes a solo persona, sometimes a chorus of villagers as in Greek drama. The scripts are fluid or non-existent, the language is question-response. But what interests me is the old problem of agit-prop theater, the dulling of the audience: "Though *entertained,* members of the audience were becoming impatient, anxious to express *their* views on all they'd heard so far" (Mike 63). The engagement of any audience, village or urban, Western or non-Western, is the singular problem for new crossroads theater post-1970s. Nigeria is no different. Revisited history can serve as a mythic foundation to a particular community, but the experimental edge that propels an audience into action derives from the challenge of the avant-garde.

Do Brazilian audiences remain engaged with their own theater, as they were in the dynamic times of Tropicalismo? When theater deals with the deepest problems of a nation, where the most basic human rights are in jeopardy and life is reduced to a state of hope-

lessness, performance art engages its audience fully by allowing them to participate. David George, in *Flash and Crash Days*, traces the re-engagement of the Brazilian audience in their own history. The urban violence of the 1990s, coupled with the horror of homeless masses and their escapes into religious fanaticism, renewed an interest in Euclides da Cunha's 1902 novel, *Os Sertões* (or *Rebellion in the Backlands*). In 1964, Antunes Filho and playwright Jorge Andrade turned this historical novel of spiritual and economic poverty and rebellion into a play *Vereda da Salvação* (or *Path of Salvation*). It was a failure (according to the critic Sábato Magaldi, quoted by George) because the 1960s audience was tuned into class and political revolution, not into poverty and urban violence (*Flash* 149). However, in 1993, it was revived verbatim by the performance company Macunaíma, again directed by Filho, with ritualist processions and violent stagings of burials and martyrdom. The audience and critics alike praised its terrifying challenge to the audience of the 1990s, an audience looking for answers to its social terror. The production's importance is, as described by George, the recreation of a "singular Brazilian theatrical style, without bowing to imported Culture. If it utilizes foreign models—the theories of Jung, Eliade, Barthes, Grotowski—it nationalizes them to the point of transforming them into original theatrical concepts" (*Flash* 150).

The crossroads effect of the 1960s and 1970s was a barter, not a form of cannibalism—but does this global exchange at the crossroads still exist? What happened to the idea of indeterminacy, of letting chance encounters—between audience and stage, between actors, between reality and fantasy—improvise possibilities? George writes that Absurd theater is revitalized in the Brazilian idea of *Besteirol*: "It is a style of zany farce noted for its utter lack of serious intent, a kind of extended vaudeville sketch [that] helped audience[s] to break old ideological habits and adapt to new circumstances" (Ibid. 138). In Nigeria, Osofisan continues to elaborate, both as playwright and as essayist, on the active relationship between audience, stage, and text. In an interview with Muyiwa Awodiya in 1993, he challenges his brand of comic, insurrectionary theater to

> get close to the spectator, to each and everyone I have trapped in the darkness or half light, to penetrate very close and intimate, like a knife in the ribs. I want to make that spectator happy but uncomfortable. I want to tear him open, guts and all, spice him, cook him in the filthy, stinking broil of our history. I believe that, if we wound ourselves often enough and painfully enough with reality, with the reality all around us, if we refuse to bandage our sensitive spots away from the hurt, that we can attain a new and positive awareness (qtd. in Banham et al. 118).

Patrice Pavis may claim that culture moves in one direction only,

from top to bottom, or north to south, or affluent to impoverished, and that entertainment is cheapened or devalued in its downhill run, but the theater of 1968-71 did not follow this pattern (Barucha 4). It rose from the bottom, from the most meager means and from the most impoverished people to the stages and laboratories of Paris. Paris was an enormous crossroads of theatrical activity; a simultaneity of avant-garde performances in Paris removed any sense of privilege of one type of theater over another. Rustom Bharucha's idea of barter, of sharing, even of stealing fragments from other cultures seems like a very enriching idea. Bharucha, like Celso, makes the point that the performance of ritual is always avant-garde to the culturally different spectator, because it is "confronted within the particularities of a specific historical condition," but cannot transcend the moment (1). He believes in a "collision of cultures."

The argument for a crossroads metaphor is that it demonstrates the ideal of globalization. Ideally, the post-war world should be a place of active non-violence where cultural differences are exchanged on par, where cultural wealth is bartered evenly. Ritual lies at the foundation of cultural riches as performed ideology. In ritual lies the possibility of transcendence of the particular human condition. All three pieces of theater discussed here demonstrate this ideal of globalization. These performances also illuminate the crossroads metaphor as a creative space in which the individual actor or character is faced with choices and must act upon whichever choice is taken. This action is revolutionary, in that everyone involved in the performance (director/interpreter-actor-audience) draws inspiration from one another. This inspiration even extends to the culture as a whole, and then to the global theater, because, in making the choice, a single performance creates agency to overthrow political structures that oppress. It is inspirational to see a character or culture in the process of unbinding. In these performances, we see artistic creativity as unbinding a culture shared within the crossroads of experimental theater. The two lines of Brecht and Artaud reached into the new theater of Nigeria and Brazil and were transformed in a process of amalgamation and barter. New acting techniques, staging techniques, encounters, mirroring, athleticism, and the use of dance and choral refrains were exchanged between the Paris crossroads and outlying (exotic to the European eye) cultures.

Where the metaphor of crossroads doesn't work is in audience reception. Audiences in Nigeria and Brazil could not—would not—become participants in a global theater program. Audiences in Paris viewed what was then called "Third World Theater" as exotic, something quite different from themselves and specific to performing the other culture. Perhaps the language barriers contributed to the lack of understanding, since Brazilian theater was performed in Portuguese, and Nigerian theater was performed in English or a mixture of Pidgin, Igbo and English. However, this theory of language barriers weakens since performances in the 1960s and 1970s utilized ritualist acts, comic non-verbal movement, and

high-tech staging sets. Peter Brook was alone in reaching out to Yoruba's performed culture, but his efforts to bring it back to Paris were met with mockery. This failure to establish intellectual parity and the failure to open up to the other culture seriously invalidated the ideal of globalization. What remains in theater are the spoils of this ideal: differentiation, diversity, and racism through categorization.

Audiences have not incorporated the openness of globalization in theater. We have seen the detachment of the Nigerian audience from themes such as AIDS workshops. Western audiences, even in the 1960s, were uncomfortable being dragged in as actors against their will. At the myriad international theater festivals between 1968 and 1971, the audiences were either other theater practitioners ready to evaluate and compete, or they bought tickets as observers. Buying a ticket to cultural events is synonymous with buying exotic foods. Theater becomes a marketplace where experience is bought, and bought only by those who can afford the price of admission. An observer is not changed or possessed. The observer observes from a singular culture that is not transcended. Malina's adage for the Living Theater in 1968 was Rimbaud's "*changer la vie*," but that did not get her accepted on tour in 1969 Brazil. Malina's production of excerpts from the Living Theater's radical repertoire was a bust. Brook's wish for a universal theater that would transcend local cultural differences did not work in Africa or Paris. Osofisan continues to write in English for an international audience and direct Western and non-Western plays for Nigerian audiences; however, his audiences, like Soyinka's, are today increasingly intellectual. They are critical, but not possessed as at the first performances of *Esu*.

The revolutionary theater of Brazil—Teatro Oficina and Teatro Arena—no longer exists, although Celso is still reimagining classics. This is clearly an audience problem. After political repression was lifted in 1974 in Brazil, audiences returned to the marketplace where they could buy cultural experiences from abroad. They were relieved of the participatory ethos of the 1960s, and they could choose what they wanted to engage in. The creative agency of global theater of the 1960s has been transformed into a marketplace. Still, a marketplace is nevertheless a form of crossroads: free will in purchasing choice; a collision of cultures; performances of ritual acts, especially playing the role of vendor and seller, masking behind one's wares. But a marketplace is also a dehumanizing place, a place where participants (audiences) follow the rules of the market and there is no opportunity to transcend the beehive of human affairs.

The crossroads metaphor applies to global theater at a certain moment in 20th century affairs. This moment worldwide saw a need for cultural exchange and for inspiration of an oppressed public, an inspiration that transcended national cultures. The Western crossroads of Oedipus provided him with moral choices, even though he ended up taking the wrong path. The non-Western crossroads, as seen in Yoruba ideology, is not only a site of self-

awareness, but offers transcendence over the human condition to the traveler. This latter crossroads, the non-Western one, is the guiding principle of the new theater of 1968-71.

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ABSTRACT:

During the Cold War, an intensive exchange of texts, concepts, and practices occurred between African-American radicals, especially those in Detroit, and the People's Republic of China. Enabled in large part by the singular Robert F. Williams, such "correspondence" reflects both a genuine simultaneity of activism joining historically and culturally disparate regions as well as significant, ultimately fatal gaps.