HANDEL KASHOPE WRIGHT

A Prescience of African Cultural Studies

The Future of Literature in Africa is Not What It Was

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COUNTERPOINTS

Studies in the Postmodern Theory of Education

Joe L. Kincheloe and Shirley R. Steinberg
General Editors

Vol. 40

PETER LANG
New York • Washington, D.C./Baltimore • Bern
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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Wright, Handel Kashope.
A prescience of African cultural studies: the future of literature
in Africa is not what it was / Handel Kashope Wright.
p. cm. — (Counterpoints; vol. 40)
Includes bibliographical references and index.
1. African literature (English)—Study and teaching.
2. African literature (English)—History and criticism—Theory, etc.
3. Africa—Civilization—Study and teaching.
I. Title. II. Series: Counterpoints (New York, N.Y.); vol. 40.
PR9340.A53W75 820.9'96'07—dc21 98-25591
ISBN 0-8204-3495-7
ISSN 1058-1634

Die Deutsche Bibliothek-CIP-Einheitsaufnahme

Wright, Handel Kashope.
A prescience of African cultural studies: the future of literature
in Africa is not what it was / Handel Kashope Wright.
–New York; Washington, D.C./Baltimore; Bern;
Frankfurt am Main; Berlin; Brussels; Vienna; Oxford: Lang.
(Counterpoints; Vol. 40)
ISBN 0-8204-3495-7

Cover design by Lisa Barfield

The paper in this book meets the guidelines for permanence and durability
of the Committee on Production Guidelines for Book Longevity
of the Council of Library Resources.

275 Seventh Avenue, 28th Floor, New York, NY 10001
www.peterlangusa.com

Printed in the United States of America

Dedicated to the memory of my father, Samuel V. C. Wright
"Papa dis na mi yone small book"

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Table of Contents

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Acknowledgments

This book is based on my dissertation which was completed as part of my doctoral work at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto and I would like to thank my supervisor, Roger Simon and my committee members, Deanne Bogdan, George Dei and Fred Case: dedicated, demanding and inspiring intellectuals who guided me through the first version of this work. Thanks also to Phil Corrigan for long distance support and those most engaging *tête-à-têtes* and to Larry Grossberg for his intellectual generosity. I'm also grateful to the faculty and graduate students at the University of Birmingham's Department of Cultural Studies and Sociology and at the University of Cardiff s Media Studies Centre, who provided very useful feedback on sections of the work I discussed in invited presentations while on sabbatical in Britain in 1999.

A special set of friends have helped me keep sane through this sometimes exhilarating, sometimes exasperating, writing journey: Christine Almeida helped me appreciate the arts; Siew Chin Chio has reminded me of the inexorable vigor of "the young and radical." Helen Harper, Nombuso Diamini, Jacinta Muteshi and Michael Hoechsmann were steadfast friends at OISE and have remained so. Amoy Ong and I have remained bonded for many years, supportive of each other. Andrew Kamara and Olu Collier have been more than friends; they have been my "Salone fambul" in Canada. And then there are those special people who are no longer with us: how I miss Lemuel Johnson and his stimulating e-mail discussions and wise academic advice; how I miss Mimi Omer, whose sharp wit kept me in stitches when I was down and whose equally sharp intellect kept me engaged when I got frustrated.

My mother. Fanny Abioseh Wright, my siblings. Cream, Faustina and Rowland, as well as my aunts Gladys Black, Marina Juxon-Smith and Christine Harding, my uncle Lawrence, and my cousin and best friend

Geoffrey Harding have always been so incredibly supportive. I owe them everything. No words can convey how much I miss my father, Samuel Victor Cream Wright—his wit, his wisdom, his love. He set the example, writing two books in the last two years of his life.

Various chapters of this book have been previously published in somewhat different form and I wish to acknowledge the relevant journals and publishing houses. The chapters of the book are drawn from both the original dissertation and the published versions of its component parts. The autobiographical story which opens Chapter One was published as "School Daze: English in the Tropics," *Trans/Forms: Insurgent Voices in Education*, 1 (1), (1994): 45–48. Chapter Two unifies two distinct arguments which were published as "Dare We De-Centre Birmingham? Troubling the Origin and Trajectories of Cultural Studies." *Taboo: Journal of Culture and Education*, 2 (Fall, 1996): 87–110. An earlier version of Chapter Three was published as "Educational Change in Sierra Leone: Making a Case for Critical African Drama Education," *International Journal of Educational Development*, 14 (2), (1994): 177–193. A shorter version of Chapter Four appeared as "Indigenous Knowledge, Literature Studies, African Development: Not So Strange Bedfellows," in George Dei and Budd Hall (eds.) (2000). *Indigenous Knowledge in Global Contexts: Multiple Readings of Our World*. University of Toronto Press. Finally, one section of Chapter Five was published as "E-Mail in African Studies," *Convergence: The Journal of Research Into New Media Technologies*, 2 (1), (1996): 19-29.

Foreword

Hoping For Cultural Studies

by Lawrence Grossberg

This is an "interesting" (to be inflected something like the way Star Trek's Vulcan Spock might say "fascinating") moment for cultural studies. It is a moment when intellectuals invested in cultural studies are asking each other and themselves lots of questions. (A few years ago, it felt as though the questions we had to address were coming more from critics, antagonists and even enemies writing outside the space of cultural studies.)

Some of the questions are urgent and crucial, others have more local and temporary import, and still others may be leading us down dead-ends. Some of the questions involve decisions about where cultural studies can or should be going, what it can or should be doing. This involves, among other things, our attempt to balance the specificity of culture studies with the need for intellectual and political alliances. Some of the questions involve debates about the need for and the appropriate practice of judging work in cultural studies and call for a renewed willingness to find and engage in new forms of criticism and elaboration. And some questions involve setting the agenda for cultural studies, asking what topics have been over-privileged, and what topics have been excluded. And for those that were intentionally excluded as it were at some point, how are they to be taken up in a way that is consistent with cultural studies practice?

In 1996, at the Crossroads in Cultural Studies Conference in Tampere, Finland, I suggested that cultural studies itself was at a crossroads.[1] At that time, for me, the most compelling issues were the challenges that success and institutionalization posed to the interdisciplinarity and politics of cultural studies. I was not and still am not willing to see these as inevitable contradictions, as if its success guaranteed depoliticization, or institutionalization guaranteed disciplinization. But I was and still am concerned with the how easy it is for what I think of as constitutive commitments of cultural studies—e.g., the politicization and contextualization of knowledge production, a refusal to sanctify either disciplinary boundaries or theoretical

universalities, an implicit commitment to pragmatic possibility—to be thrown aside somewhere on the road to success and institutionalization.

These questions have not disappeared. Quite the contrary! They have become more urgent even as other questions have appeared. Individually, we have gone on doing our work, making choices and commitments. But collectively, I fear, as a field and practice of inquiry, we have to a large extent, been stuck at that crossroads, uncertain how to move on, and in what directions. And, speaking bluntly, with enough notable exceptions to keep the field exciting and valuable, I fear that too much of the work is following the same comfortable roads, asking the same questions, reproducing the same answers, apparently afraid to break from 'the same old same old,' afraid to take on the new and pressing issues and to take up the theoretical and empirical tools, and the disciplinary vocabularies and knowledges, they may demand.

One of the most difficult questions facing cultural studies today has emerged recently, in part out of its very success, as it has increasingly become both a multi-national and multi-regional discourse. The more cultural studies conceives of itself as a global enterprise, the more difficult it becomes to control the diversity that lays claim to "cultural studies." "What is cultural studies?" gives way to the more difficult question, "where is cultural studies?"[2] This shifting ground of the very self-reflexivity of cultural studies has had, and will continue to have, profound consequences for our understanding of the "crossroads" we are at, and of the possibilities for moving on.

That inaugural Crossroads conference was also the first time I met the Sierra Leonean Handel Kashope Wright; he gave a keynote address[3] that began, albeit indirectly, to consider the consequences of rethinking the geography of cultural studies. Handel, like others before him,[4] challenged what was for many the dominant narrative of origin within cultural studies: the narrative usually starts from the worker education backgrounds, and the grounding work, of Raymond Williams, E. P. Thompson, Richard Hoggart, and Stuart Hall, and then follow the trajectory of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham. Critiques of this narrative are often in danger of conflating two different articulations. First, it is the case, I believe, that many statements of the narrative are seriously inadequate, presented in too simple, too linear, too harmonious a fashion, to represent the history of British cultural studies. For example, not only do they fail to acknowledge the struggles and conflicts within the Centre, they fail to locate the Centre in relation both to other intellectual paradigms and

projects, and to the political contexts in which the people associated with the Centre worked. Of course, some versions of the narrative—including I must say, almost every instance I have heard recounted by someone who had been involved in that history—not only avoid such problems, they also self-consciously recognize that their telling of the story is only one of the multiple stories that could be and should be told about British cultural studies.

But this is not what brought Handel (and most of the other telling critics of the narrative) to the issue. Handel was less concerned with the narrative of British cultural studies itself than with the way that narrative has been deployed to tell the story of the very emergence of the project of cultural studies itself. That is, the narrative is sometimes used in ways that make two further claims: that this was the first emergence of the project or discourse of cultural studies; and that all subsequent 'sitings' of cultural studies can be traced back, genealogically as it were, to this originary site. This is a more difficult issue to deal with, perhaps because it has sometimes functioned that way despite the best intentions and the explicit desires (and even statements) of many of those who have re-iterated the narrative itself. That is, this deployment of the narrative reproduces, almost at the level of a structural unconscious, patterns of colonial ethnocentrism. As Handel actually put the question, would it be so difficult to assume that the first appearance of cultural studies actually happened in a small popular theater and educational project in Kenya?

I do not think, even then, that Handel realized how profoundly disturbing his question was; this book makes it strikingly clear. In one sense, Handel was pointing out that "globalization" could no longer just be a problem in cultural studies; it had to be taken up as a problem for cultural studies. Precisely because cultural studies was becoming a global discourse, a part of the global knowledge production industries, it could no longer ignore that the very theories it was developing, the very analyses it was offering, had now to be brought to bear on its own practices and relations. Many people in cultural studies have been wrestling with an understanding of globalization as a dialectic of sorts between the local and the global. Such theories have at least two implications: first, that globalization cannot be seen as a simple process of homogenization; and second, that the identity of "globalization' as one term in the dialectic is itself problematic (e.g., sometimes referring to particular developments in capitalism, or to particular cultural forms typically associated with the United States). Whatever the utility of this model of hybridization for understanding the processes of economic, political, and cultural globalization, I do think that it is no longer

possible for cultural studies to assume the luxury of pretending, even for a moment, that there is some singular voice of cultural studies that can claim to stand on the side of the global, as a global voice in the dialectic.

The question Handel poses is not where the first performance of cultural studies actually happened, but how do we recognize and talk about different performances of cultural studies without taking any one as the founding and therefore normative statement/event? How do we look at each performance of cultural studies in different places as "an integral part of the conversation about what cultural studies is and how it should develop internationally" rather than as merely "an application of existing (universalized?) models of cultural studies"? We cannot assume that every local event of cultural studies is an exemplar or token of some—whatever—universal definition or standard of cultural studies, or rather of some wherever that locates the standard. But of course, a standard, as Handel points out, is always located and that location is never random or accidental. The "proper" voice of cultural studies is almost always, with a kind of unreflective inevitability that is frightening considering what we claim to be doing, located within the West, and even more, within the English-speaking world, and even more, in Britain and the United States.

This book then stands as a call for a non-ethnocentric approach to the globalization of cultural studies, and as an example (in Agamben's sense, in its singularity) of how such a project might begin. Let me give just two examples, drawing upon two of the most important arguments that Handel makes in this work. The first involves the powerful position of literary studies in Africa,[5] and Handel admits quite movingly, its central place in his own biography. He offers one of the most compelling criticisms of literary studies since Tony Bennett's ***Outside Literature***. For Handel, literary studies—seen as a western discipline that was exported to Africa by the colonial powers[6] as the center of liberal education—is antithetical to indigenous notions of both literature and criticism as utilitarian. Consequently, it cannot simply be re-arranged or rethought into an "African framework." Nor will it suffice to take a "cultural studies approach to literature," which would leave the category of the literary—and hence, the discipline—in tact. In the end, literary studies has to face its own limits "in contributing meaningfully to addressing practical problems facing Africa(ns)." Handel proposes constructing "an overtly politicized, utilitarian African literary studies," which is to say, he proposes re-imagining literary studies as cultural studies. He does not claim that cultural studies is less eurocentric than literary studies but rather, that it opens the possibility of a "utilitarian criticism of literature that is itself decidedly utilitarian." This leads, quite seamlessly, to the sec-

ond issue. For Handel, an African cultural studies would be more than just academic; it would have to be both utilitarian and activist. It would "be a bridge between school and community." Its politics would have to be, in his terms, "performative."

This book is a reflection on the existence and possibility of a relatively distinct African cultural studies (which, Handel takes pain to remind us, is not the same as cultural studies in Africa) in the context of a non-ethnocentric approach to globalization. It is, then, a radically contextual effort to think about cultural studies in the context of Africa. Yet in that very effort, it also shows us how both habit and desire can get in the way of this project, undermining our very efforts to move from an ethnocentric to a contextual logic. As I read Handel's powerful indictment of literary studies in Africa, I found myself constantly trying to appropriate it as a tool in my own arguments against the academic hegemony of literary studies in the United States, and the sometimes devastating effects of that discipline's appropriations of cultural studies. It is not that there are no relations between the criticisms (and the contexts), but my desire was too ready to erase the necessary work of articulation. I take some solace from the fact that even Handel seems not entirely able to resist this trap. Thus, rather than allowing his demand for the politicization of African cultural studies to stand on his own analysis of the context of education and cultural production in Africa, he jumps much too quickly to align himself with Anglo-American attacks on the academic location of cultural studies, Again, the work of articulation is glossed over, as are the very different contexts in which the possibilities for the politicization of intellectual work have to be opened up.

In the end, it is the relation between existence and possibility that is at stake, both for Handel and, I believe, for cultural studies. A particular logic structures Handel's argument, and makes it, in the end, an argument about temporality and agency. Handel suggests both that African cultural studies already exists in what he calls a "heuristic form," and that it is a possibility waiting to come into being. In fact, as much as anything, Handel's "initial articulation" of the project of African cultural studies is an attempt to call into being that which already exists as a possibility within the real context of African political and intellectual life.[7]

There is a very practical side to ethnocentrism; writers speaking from some place other than the normative sites of cultural studies (generally, the English-speaking academy, but more specifically, the United States, where there is the largest market for "cultural studies") often find that they must subordinate their concrete analysis to a global theoretical dis-

course. Of course, if cultural studies is a contextual analysis of contexts, then such a strategy contradicts the very project of cultural studies. But to resist this usually means facing an even more difficult situation: while those of us who write within and about the United States (and other places that have become more or less "normative" sites of cultural studies) are allowed to assume a general familiarity with the contexts we write about (even though it is patently false), those writing within and/or about other places are not allowed such luxury, and hence they must constantly risk either the boredom of endless background or the incomprehensibility—and even worse, the refusal—of spatial alienation.

In the end, I can do no better than to re-produce Handel's quoting of Thelma Obah: "It is a legacy of colonialism that education in former territories is, to some extent, an alienating experience." What I cannot reproduce here is the joy and passion that Handel helps us to hear in this statement. Once we can hear that joy, we cannot simply appropriate it into the culture of critique[8] that we are endlessly recreating in the western academy. It is not simply another statement of difference, or another attack on education or colonialism. It is an empowering statement for both the colonized and the colonizer. After all, isn't education also alienating (if not in quite the same ways) in the space of the (former) colonizers? And it is, above all, a statement about existence and possibility, a calling forth of a new imagination of education, and a new education of imagination. That is what Handel Kashope Wright is seeking here, in his desire for an African cultural studies. Hopefully, it is what we are all seeking.

Introduction

Is Adding Talking Drums to the Orchestra Enough? (African) Literary Traditions or African Cultural Studies?

"The song [I have come] to sing remains unsung to this day."
(Rabindranath Tagore, quoted in Naresh Sohal)

This book is an articulation of a paradigm shift that I believe is necessary for continental Africans to make from taking a literary approach to the study of literature to taking a cultural studies approach to literature. More accurately, it is an articulation of an argument for continental Africans to make a transition from studying literature "as an end in itself" to studying literature as one of many possible aspects of cultural studies.

Ostensibly, it might be useful to offer a definition of "literature" at the outset, since it is a concept and discourse which will be argued against in much of this book. However, as literary and cultural critics, from Jean-Paul Sartre (1949b/1988b) to Rene Wellek (1982) to Timothy Reiss (1992) to Michel Foucault (1988), to Roland Barthes (1987) have asserted, or inferred in their approach to the issue, literature is notoriously difficult to define. What these figures have concentrated on doing is addressing, problematizing, expanding and/or refuting the characteristics of literature. Reiss puts the matter quite directly when he declares that

> As Welleck presents them, these two activities [defending literature and attacking the credibility and legitimacy of literature] are often simultaneous but neither, therefore, particular to literature nor defining of it. That the opposition is possible at all, and in these terms, hints that those on both sides of the argument are neglecting a few aspects of the question. A major one is that they take for granted that they know what literature is. And of course, they do. They know what it is from their culture, whatever difficulty they might have in providing any seriously and generally acceptable definition. They also know what authority and subversion and reaction are. (Reiss, 1992, p. 1)

What Reiss stresses here is not only the difficulty of defining literature and the fact that this task is often bypassed but also the taken-for-grant-

edness of a heuristic understanding of what literature is as well as the situatedness of that heuristic definition, the idea as he puts it that literature is social and "what we know as 'literature' has occurred in a particular time and place" (Reiss, 1992, p. 2). The notion of the situatedness of literature is a premise of this book. In other words, the fact that what has been passed on to Africans (through colonial and neocolonial education) as "literature" is a product and tradition of western Europe which does not necessarily reflect or easily incorporate African written, oral, and performance forms. Also, bearing in mind the elusiveness of the concept, I will not be attempting to define literature in this exercise, but rather working with, and addressing its ascribed and changing characteristics.

My central thesis of making a case for undertaking a paradigm shift from literary, aesthetics-driven literature studies to a more utilitarian, multi-form, overtly politicized African cultural studies is premised on a conviction that received mainstream, hegemonic notions of literature, literary criticism, and literature studies are hypocritically "apolitical" and serve little practical purpose in the African context: indeed, it could be asserted that they serve little purpose in any context and whatever purpose they are supposed to serve is dubious at best. I employ the phrase "hypocritically apolitical literature" to signal the ways in which the inherently political nature of literature studies has been systematically obfuscated through such notions as the "universality" of "good literature," the idea that literature exists in a self-sufficient, hermetically sealed cosmos and therefore addresses the emotions and serves as a source of escapism. Perhaps most importantly, literature is traditionally supposed to instruct through delight, or, alternatively, as Northrop Frye (1963) would have it, educate the imagination. In terms of politics, therefore, literature does "reduce" itself and should not be "reduced" to texts and a discourse which address more overtly worldly politics such as issues of social difference (e.g., gender, race, class, and sexual orientation) and how they can be explored, contended, reformulated, and utilized in addressing discrimination and bringing about a more just society. The overall effect of these "characteristics" of literature and literature studies is a discourse that is supposedly decidedly apolitical.

The transition that I am advocating here, then, is from the restrictions of traditional literature studies and literary criticism to a discourse, African cultural studies, that will enable the study of literature in conjunction with non-literary forms such as performance and orature.[1] It is a transition from aesthetics-driven literary criticism to a more utilitarian cultural studies (which does not eschew aesthetics completely). There is

to be a shift in emphasis, therefore, from literary concerns to cultural and political concerns. "Study" in this reformulation is to be expanded to include the performance and production of "texts" (broadly defined). The supposed universality of literature is to be replaced by cultural studies' concentration on the specificities of and differences between cultures. The hegemonic notion that literature is "apolitical" or concerned with a politics of itself and for itself is to be replaced by an overt politics drawn from historical, sociopolitical, and cultural issues found not only outside the text but also outside the discourse of literature as a whole.

All of this is not to suggest that the discourse of literature is always apolitical. In fact, recent developments in literary theory and criticism and literature pedagogy have rendered the apolitical nature of literature suspect, if not unsustainable. Critics like Terry Eagleton (1983), Alan Wald (1989), and Raymond Williams (1989) have illustrated that there are no consistent and clearly discernible and measurable instruments used in determining whether a piece of writing is literature or not, and if it was, whether it is good literature or not. When faced with the question, Michel Foucault (1988) has admitted that a systematic mechanism and process of discerning "good" from "bad" literature does not exist, or if it does, he is yet to discover let alone understand it. In terms of literature existing as a self-sufficient discourse, Edward Said (1986) has asserted and shown that literature does not exist in a hermetically sealed cosmos but in fact by its very existence is worldly (that is, it affects the world and is affected by the world). Although critics like Eagleton (1983) and Said (1986) were making these points about literature's political nature in the 1980s, the argument that literature is political is hardly new. For example, in the 1940s, the Marxist critic Jean-Paul Sartre (1949b/1988b) had developed the perspective that literature is overtly political or amenable to being utilized in the service of the project of social justice. It is in fact a testimony to the persistent and continued hegemonic nature of the perspective of literature as an "apolitical" discourse that these arguments have to be reiterated and expanded in contemporary times. As far as literature's supposed apolitical insularity is concerned, many recent works of literary theory acknowledge not only that social difference has encroached formally into "literature" but that it has in fact contributed identifiable schools and approaches to literary theory. Edited collections like Philip Rice & Patricia Waugh (1989), Douglas Atkins & Laura Morrow (1989) and Peter Collier & Helga Geyer-Ryan (1990), for example, include feminist, Marxist, and postcolonial literary theory. The insurgence of identity politics in literary theory has meant the undertaking of

interesting shifts such as Deanne Bogdan's (1992) feminist and decidedly worldly revision of Frye's notion of "the educated imagination," a revision which refutes the traditional "apolitical" aim of literature education to instruct through delight and, in an attempt at "re-educating the imagination," replaces Frye's universal imagination and reception approach with a more individualized, reader-response imagination and with the approach of engagement. The influence of Marxism and poststructuralism in literary criticism has contributed to the exposure of literary criticism's inherently political nature and the emergence of approaches that counter the hegemony of supposedly apolitical criticism. Catherine Belsey (1980), for example, puts forward the notion that mainstream literary criticism is in fact a hegemonic orthodoxy, which has passed into common sense and is now able to make truth claims. She exposes both the common sense and truth claims of mainstream, "apolitical" literary criticism as false claims, and identifies new approaches—New Criticism, Archetypal Criticism, Reader Theory, and so on—that have emerged to counter the truth claims and taken-for-grantedness of mainstream, hegemonic literary criticism. Finally, and most significantly, she utilizes a combination of semiotics, poststructuralism, psychoanalysis, and Marxism to articulate a new approach which she identifies as "critical practice," a notion of literary praxis which indicates and works with the inherently political nature of literature and literary criticism approaches.[2] All these developments in sum have rendered suspect if not untenable the notion of literature's supposedly apolitical character. As Terry Eagleton (1983) concludes, "there is, in fact, no need to drag politics into literary theory: as with South African sport, it has been there from the beginning" (p. 194).

Despite the emergence of overtly politicized and identity politics-based approaches to literary theory and literature education, despite the systematic exposing of the unfoundedness and unsustainability of literature's supposed universalism and insularity, the perspective of literature as an apolitical, self-sufficient discourse based on universal values with the aim of instructing through delight not only endures but remains dominant in popular sensibilities, in departments of literature and literary associations, and in publications in the west, and through colonialism, neocolonialism, and western hegemony in much of the world. Eagleton (1990) has noted that even in a (formerly?) colonized "country" like Ireland, there is a surprisingly dominant conception of literature as based on an "aesthetic as 'disinterested' mythic solution to real contradictions" (p. 33). It is the historical and continued universalization of this conception of literature and literature studies, the enduring dominance of this

"stalest of Arnoldian clichés" (Eagleton, 1990, p. 33) that I shall be referring to throughout this book as the hegemony of western, apolitical literature.

As Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1983b) has pointed out, the colonial experience in Africa created not only a colonial elite "made in the image of the western bourgeoisie" (p. 80), but, conversely, also led to a counter-hegemonic "economic, political and cultural struggle for national independence and total liberation" (p. 80). As he concludes, this has created a binary, mutually opposing system in different spheres in contemporary Africa, including the cultural sphere:

> On the cultural level, in the colonies and neo-colonies there grew two cultures in mortal conflict: foreign imperialist; national and patriotic. And so, out of the different nationalities often inhabiting one geographic state, there emerged people's literature, music, dance, theater, art in fierce struggle against foreign imperialist literature, music, dance, theater, imposed on colonies, semicolonies, and neo-colonies. Thus the major contradiction in the third world is between national identity and imperialist domination. (p. 80)

While I would argue that the boundaries between the two systems were sometimes much more blurred than Ngugi allows, there is little doubt that this duality is reflected in both African literature and African literary criticism. Africans traditionally have a different aesthetics from Europeans and some African writers and critics like Izevbaye, (1971), Wole Soyinka (1976), Chinweizu et al. (1983), and of course, Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1986) himself have conceived of African literature, literary aesthetics, and literary criticism as being distinct from their European counterparts. Despite their efforts, however, received Eurocentric versions of literary aesthetics and literary criticism still remain hegemonic in literature education in Africa. Given this state of affairs, it is evident that literature studies in Africa, like much of education in Africa, is still colonized. There is a need, therefore, to both decolonize and Africanize literature studies in Africa.

However, the struggle to establish and maintain African literature should not be taken to mean that the authors and critics I have mentioned here are interested in exclusive and inherently insular African literary and cultural discourse. Similarly, I do not subscribe to the notion of a hermetically sealed African literary and cultural discourse. Because cultures are inherently permeable, and because of the danger of international ghettoization[3] that such a discourse would represent, I believe an exclusive and insular African literary criticism and literature studies would be

both unachievable and undesirable.[4] In my view, therefore, while there is a need to develop a relatively distinct African literary discourse, there is also a need to integrate African literature, literary criticism, and literature studies, indeed, African knowledge production in general, into what is globally taken up as worthwhile knowledge. Negritude has often been caricatured as a "racialist," insular, and exclusivist discourse, and in a fairly recent attempt to address such unfair characterizations, one of the fathers of Negritude, Leopold Sedar Senghor (1990/1994) reiterated his definition of this Black literary and cultural movement in these terms:

> But once again, what is negritude? Ethnologists and sociologists today speak of "different civilizations." It is obvious that peoples differ in their ideas and their languages, in their philosophies and their religions, in their customs and their institutions, in their literature and their art. Who would deny that Africans, too, have a certain way of conceiving life and of living it? A certain way of speaking, singing and dancing; of painting and sculpturing, and even of laughing and crying? Nobody, probably; for otherwise we would not have been talking about 'Negro art' for the last sixty years and Africa would be the only continent today without its ethnologists and sociologists. What, then, is negritude? It is—as you can guess from what precedes—the sum of the cultural values of the black world; that is, a certain active presence in the world, or better, in the universe. It is, as John Reed and Clive Wake call it, a certain 'way of relating oneself to the world and to others'. Yes, it is essentially relations with others, an opening out to the world, contact and participation with others. (pp. 27–28)

Thus Senghor commences with an articulation of a distinct, necessarily politicized African cultural aesthetics and discourse and proceeds to emphasize that these are to operate not in isolation but in relation to and indeed in interaction with other aesthetics and cultural discourses. It is a similar conception and approach that I bring to my consideration of not only African literature studies but also African cultural studies and its place in the world. For example, in trying to point to a relatively distinct African cultural studies, I hold that while there are schools of cultural studies in Africa, cultural studies in Africa is not necessarily synonymous with African cultural studies. I believe that African cultural studies does exist in heuristic form, however; and while this book will not necessarily explicate in full what it is and can be, it will constitute an initial articulation of such a project, one which will require the input of many other voices, one which I have spent some time conceptualizing but which I can only articulate here in a tentative, perfunctory manner. My situation is reminiscent of that portrayed through the lyrics of the Bengali poet, Rabindranath Tagore:

> The song I came to sing remains unsung to this day.
> I have spent my time in stringing and unstringing my instrument.
> The line has not come true, the words have not been rightly set;
> Only there is the agony of wishing in my heart.
> (Tagore, quoted in Sohal, 1993)[5]

Like Tagore I feel very tentative about the project I am about to articulate here, the song I have come to sing. Like him, I have spent much time thinking about this project of possibility and preparing to articulate it, and, while I am convinced and passionate about its efficacy, I feel my arguments cannot but fall short of the vision and its potential as well as the passion and enthusiasm which drives me to articulate it.

As an African I am interested in the evolution of decolonized, just, democratic, and compassionate African societies. The struggle to evolve such societies involves, among other things, the critical examination of the historical (i.e., past, the present, and the future) relationship between the continent and the rest of the world, as well as the social, cultural, political, economic, and spiritual organization and functioning of African communities. I am also concerned with the historical and still pervasive marginalization of Africa and African knowledge production in the global context (and indeed, through the hegemony of Eurocentric knowledge, even in African contexts). This is a situation testified to by the fact that Robert Bates, V. Y. Mudimbe, and Jean O'Barr (1993a) consider it necessary in their *Africa and the Disciplines* to articulate an argument for studying Africa and the contributions Africans have made to the development of academic disciplines.[6] I am therefore interested in addressing issues pertaining to Africans not as what Deborah Britzman (1995) would describe and decry as "a special event" but as an integral aspect of global knowledge production, much as Senghor (1990/1994) conceives of Negritude operating in reaction to and in interaction with articulations of others' literary and cultural traditions. My personal project as a Sierra Leonean and former teacher of "English" is the utilization of education in general and cultural studies and literary practice (i.e., theory, criticism, and pedagogy) in this dual, comprehensive African project. In short, I am interested in utilizing cultural studies and the study of literature in an African project of possibility.

Originally I had conceived of the project for this book (for that is how I conceive of it—as a project rather than a topic) as the development of an African framework for literature studies. This original project (which I considered to be an integral aspect of my long-term personal project) would entail identifying and drawing principally on elements of African

aesthetics, worldviews, and cultures to articulate literary theory, criticism, and a pedagogy of literature studies that, though necessarily informed by the western tradition, are predominantly African. It would expose and address the Eurocentrism of literary studies as practiced by many in African educational institutions. The project had many roots, some going as far back as my secondary school days in Sierra Leone and others to my more recent experiences as a doctoral student at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education in Canada; some of the roots are moments I can vividly recall, while others are overall impressions, the specific origins of which I do not or cannot recall. Others still have more to do with my politics and my vision of a better Sierra Leonean and by extension, a better African society, and more equitable cultural interconnections between African knowledge and non-African (more specifically western) knowledge production. I have used one of the more vivid, early examples as an introduction to Chapter One. My hope is that this account of the conditions under which my classmates and I learned English literature, the unfamiliarity of the material and cultures presented, conveys some of my early discomfort with literature studies.

"It is a legacy of colonialism that education in former territories is, to some extent, an alienating experience." (Thelma Obah)

There were several roots that fed the initial impetus for this book (even in its original version). The necessarily "guilty"[7] retelling of a slice of the story of my days as a literature student in Sierra Leone I provide in the opening pages of Chapter One is intended to give a vicarious illustration of one of the earliest and most problematic of those roots, namely, the issue of alienation.[8] Whether they come to love literature (as I did) or to hate and reject it (as many others did), African students had and still have to deal with an inordinate number of texts that are foreign and alienating. Thelma Obah (1982, 1983) provides a succinct explication of African literature students' situation. Because the vast majority of literature texts are still selected from the (former?) colonizer's canon, African students are faced with material that refers to concepts and ideas outside of their experience and which they can therefore neither relate to nor appreciate substantially. Further, the students' vast storehouse of nonschool (especially African) knowledge and experience are rendered virtually irrelevant in the "literature" class (as in virtually every other class). Obah's (1982) solution is a recommendation to include more "ethnic literature" in the syllabus.[9]

Obah, therefore, proposes to resolve the problem of alienation (which initially appears so sprawling and awesome in its size) by neatly deflating it with ethnic literature, making "English" more accessible and familiar for the African student. However, a closer examination of what it can or should entail reveals that Obah's simple solution raises or leaves unanswered more questions than it answers. What is to be considered "ethnic literature?" Is it the concept restricted to written works that fit into western genres or can it include traditional forms of performance and orature? How much ethnic literature should be introduced and when? Should it replace some or all of the texts from the received canon? On what bases are certain ethnic works to be included and others excluded from the syllabus? How will mastery of this control be determined? What will constitute adequate mastery and how will it be determined for different grade levels? Finally, does the inclusion of relevant materials not leave unresolved the elements of the problem of alienation that have to do not so much with the formal curriculum but with the generally alienating aspects of the hidden curriculum, problems inherent in the institution of schooling?

Leaving these questions unanswered, I turn to a second root, the problems I had with my M.A. thesis at the University of Windsor, Canada (Wright, 1987). I wrote my thesis on the relationship between forces of change and traditional Nigerian society in Wole Soyinka's drama.[10] Although the thesis concentrated on Soyinka's fictional communities, it contained passages which linked those communities to the reality of Nigerian and African societies. For example, some passages used actual historical and contemporary information about Nigeria to create a comparative context for Soyinka's fictional communities. Also, events in the fictional communities were used to make points about the problems of "real" Nigerian and other African societies. I received mixed feedback on this approach. My supervisor pronounced it unusual but effective. Another member of my thesis committee disapproved of the juxtaposition of the "world of texts and the stage," on the one hand, and the reality of Nigerian and other African societies, on the other. He advised me to set aside the sections that introduced "real" society. With the support of my supervisor, I retained the sections and used my fifth and final chapter to make a thinly disguised case to justify my approach by making reference to critics like Oyin Ogunba (1975) who had taken a similar approach to Soyinka's work. In the end, my committee allowed the sections to remain in the thesis.

Even after my defense of my thesis, I still did not understand the crux of the controversy. I could not understand why my approach had been considered "unusual" and "interesting," let alone why it was objectionable. What was it about my topic, my approach, or my method that had made my thesis controversial (initially at least)? Readings I did later in literary theory and critical pedagogy, and discussions with colleagues on the relationship between language and power, gave me some understanding of the ways in which my thesis was at least unconventional. My juxtaposition of the world of the plays and the real world ignored the perceived dichotomy between the two worlds. Was I unconventional or was I simply "wrong" (in literary terms) in including these aspects in my thesis?

The third root is my slow and painful acknowledgment of the limitations of literature studies in contributing meaningfully to addressing pressing practical problems facing Africa(ns). After I completed my M.A. in English in Canada and returned to Sierra Leone, I began to think of ways in which I could "make a difference" with my degree in a country that was predominantly oral and in which many of the pressing problems were more political and economic than cultural (in the sense of high culture) or aesthetic. I quickly concluded that my qualifications were of very limited practical use and I tried to assuage my guilt at acquiring what were proving such ostentatious qualifications by attempting to convince myself I could undertake community work in addition to being a teacher of English. In the end I faced the fact that literature, especially approached through literary studies, is severely limited in terms of its practical applications to everyday issues and problems. From then on I seriously considered getting out of the discipline of literature and into something more practical. Education became that practical choice. To be more accurate, I was precipitously relaunched into the world of education since the university did not hire me to teach English, and I finally got a job as editor for an educational center based at a teachers' training college.[11]

As editor of occasional papers in education at the Centre for Research into the Education of Secondary Teachers (CREST), I finally felt I was doing practical work that had real potential to make a difference in people's lives. However, I was still interested in literature, and when I came back to Canada to do an M.Ed. degree, I ended up writing my thesis on Sierra Leonean Advanced Level ("A" Level) students' cognitive and affective responses to the "A" Level literature curriculum and the West Africa wide "A" Level literature examinations (Wright, 1990). This to me was a

reasonably satisfactory exercise that combined my interest in the rather impractical discipline of literature studies with the much more practical and utilitarian discipline of education. I have tried to maintain this balance since, but through my immersion into the field of education and especially through my exposure to more overtly progressive educational approaches to education at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), I found myself less and less involved in literature and more involved in questions in the field of education (from anti-racist education to feminist research, from Black studies to critical pedagogy, from qualitative educational research to cultural studies).

The fourth root is my politics, which includes a vision of more just, democratic, and egalitarian African, and by extension, global societies. In order to concretize and further personalize these concepts, I wish to illustrate something of their manifestation and development through a continuation of my examination of the situation surrounding my M.A. thesis. Initially, I had been urged to change my thesis topic since there was a lack of expertise in African literature among the faculty. Why did I remain adamant about writing on African literature and on keeping what I could only articulate to myself at the time as a "real issue" as my topic? In hindsight I believe that my thesis reflected my growing but not fully articulated concern that my literary practice address not only fictional situations but the real problems of African societies as well. My growing politicization around continental and diasporic African issues and my desire to contribute, however modestly, to the evolution of better African communities had led me to the conclusion that the most worthwhile topic was one that dealt with a concrete, "real life" African problem, and the works of Wole Soyinka provided both problems and contexts suitable for this. Also, I was employing an approach to African literature which seemed apt given that most African writers and critics emphasize that African literature is utilitarian and that, for the most part, African writers do not indulge in art-for-art's-sake.[12] However, the appropriateness of a utilitarian criticism of literature that is itself decidedly utilitarian (in some ways the attempt to articulate this was a heuristic version of an exercise in cultural studies) was so self-evident to me that I employed it almost instinctively and never actually explained it to my thesis committee. Consequently, my African-centered, pseudo-cultural studies criticism must have seemed too narrow, subjective, and political in the face of what was then and indeed continues to be the hegemonic western tradition's emphasis on the supposed universal condition and the "apolitical" nature of literary criticism.

"My title is intended as both indicative ('Literary into cultural studies') and an imperative ('Literary *into* cultural studies!')" (Antony Easthope)

After considering many of these root issues and after starting to articulate my African literary project, I found it was necessary to reconceptualize the project as one that spilled over the boundaries of literature and indeed often ran against the grain of literature. I had been attracted to the possibilities opened up by the anti-discipline of cultural studies at OISE, and in the end I began to see my project as involving the articulation and justification of a shift from literature studies in Africa to African cultural studies. It is important to point out, however, that though this position will be articulated in the pages of this book as a more or less straightforward shift, it was actually arrived at in practice and in process. I put forward the root issues here in order to give the reader some indication of why I have felt uncomfortable with literary studies for quite some time and why the issues underlying my discomfort led me first to a reconceptualization of literary studies in the African context and eventually to a need to articulate what I am calling African cultural studies.

Even though I have ended up firmly convinced of the need to make the paradigm shift from literary studies to cultural studies in Africa, I still believe my original project of articulating an African framework for literature studies is viable and has considerable merit. I have therefore sketched the outlines of an African framework for literature studies, as well as a justification for such a reconceptualization of literary studies in Africa, in Chapter One of this book. The conclusion I arrive at, however, is that it is not enough to have an African framework for literature studies and that by the time literature has been reconceptualized to the extent that it is utilitarian, overtly political, and its genres expanded and reconfigured (for example to make orature and performance integral, even pivotal elements), it is doubtful in fact that one is still dealing with literature. Even the notion of literature (as Jacques Derrida would have it, literature "under erasure") seems inadequate to capture the extent to which I conceive of the discipline being reconceptualized. In the end, conceptualizing the change as one that is nothing less than paradigmatic (involving a change from literary to cultural studies) allowed me to articulate changes without being restricted by the bounds of what literature is supposed to be or worrying about what such transgressions mean in terms of viability within the discipline of English studies.

Once I made the decision to articulate the paradigm shift from literary studies in Africa to African cultural studies, I began to reread materi-

al on cultural studies with a view to articulating African cultural studies. I noticed that while there was cultural studies in Africa (for example work being done at the Centre for Cultural and Media Studies (CCMS) in Durban, South Africa), such programs, while quite innovative and locally grounded, were not without their limitations. The critique leveled at the groundbreaking work of the CCMS (Masilela, 1988) was that it appeared to be implementing received, EuroAmerican notions of cultural studies in the African context. Also, although there were otherwise excellent accounts of transitions from literary to cultural studies including Antony Easthope's (1991) *Literary Into Cultural Studies* and Robert Morgan's (1993) "Transitions from literary to cultural studies," these accounts were arguments made within the general western tradition in Easthope's case, and within a very specific Canadian context in Morgan's case. They therefore did not include information on parallel transitions being made in the Third World in general or in Africa more specifically. In other words the problem of Eurocentrism (which is at the root of my discomfort with literature studies in Africa) was not to be solved or circumvented by simply making a transition to cultural studies. In fact, I discovered that despite its empowering, expansive, and progressive politics, cultural studies was for the most part characterized as much as English studies is by an equally pervasive, taken-for-granted Eurocentrism. I therefore began to work on how an African cultural studies would be different from a received Eurocentric cultural studies. In fact, I began to see some existing African texts such as Ngugi wa Thiong'o's (1993) *Moving the Centre: The Struggle for Cultural Freedoms* as "always already" African cultural studies.[13]

Secondly, I began to consider how to articulate African cultural studies not as a separate discipline or a marginalized aspect of the anti-discipline of cultural studies but as an integral part of the conversation about what cultural studies is and how it should develop internationally. In other words I am not merely advocating the study of Africa and asserting that Africa and Africans are as worthy of study as Europeans. I am neither advocating the evolution of a new discipline nor an entirely new framework for taking up the study of Africa, one which would address the exclusion of Africa from what is globally considered worthwhile knowledge. As Bates, Mudimbe, & O'Barr (1993b) point out, such approaches to the relationship between Africa and the disciplines in the end miss a crucial point: "that while the curriculum may be controlled by the disciplines, the study of Africa has helped to define these very disciplines" (p. xii). The point, therefore, is not to argue for equality of access; the point is that "the study of Africa is already lodged in the core of the modern universi-

ty" (p. xii). My strategy is to articulate African cultural studies as a distinct but integral aspect of cultural studies and global knowledge production.

Finally, I took into account the centrality of the shift from literary to cultural studies as my primary interest and point of entry into cultural studies (as it has been for many) but also took into consideration the fact that this is but one of many possible routes through which one can leave the restrictions of specific academic disciplines for the more complex, comprehensive, and rather uncertain options and possibilities opened up by cultural studies. Chapter Two is an articulation of African cultural studies in the context of pointing to the possibilities opened up by a shift to cultural studies, a problematizing of Eurocentric cultural studies (this involves challenging such elements as the accepted narrative of the origins of cultural studies to the continued exclusion or marginalization of "Other" versions of cultural studies), and an identification of both heuristic versions of cultural studies and a more traditionally established school of cultural studies in Africa. In a sense, the chapter takes up what Foucault (1980) has described as the insurrection of subjugated knowledges. However, I insist on the conceptualization of African cultural studies as more than an insurrection, and I contextualize it in such a way that I hope it will be taken up as more than subjugated knowledge. In my view, while the notions of insurrection and subjugated knowledge are powerful and descriptive of my intervention in some ways, they are also limiting in other ways. For example, I do not want to reduce African works to being works that are merely subjugated since they contain knowledge and perspective that may well be in active use in some quarters (e.g., the spirit, approach, and activities of Kamiriithu are still alive for the villagers involved even as the work undertaken there has been actively suppressed by the Kenyan government and remains largely unacknowledged as cultural studies in the west).

This raises a number of questions: in what sense, in whose eyes, and using what criteria are we to assert that a body of work or knowledge production constitute simply "subjugated" knowledge? We can ask similar questions about whether the reconsideration of a body of works or the reconceptualization of certain knowledge should be described merely as part of an insurrection. In other words while Foucault is right in declaring such works "subjugated knowledge," this designation is valid within the EuroAmerican epistemic tradition, or, within EuroAmerican-dominated "world" knowledge production. For the local communities from which such works and ideas originate, they are neither insurrectory nor subjugated.

Having articulated my discomfort with traditional literary studies, described the need for a transition to cultural studies, and sketched what African cultural studies could be, I turn my attention to exploring aspects of what an African cultural studies might be. In other words, in the rest of the book I attempt to point to, and examine in some detail, issues which an African cultural studies might address. In selecting and addressing these issues I keep in mind the fact that the issues selected have to be reflective of practical concerns facing Africa and Africans and at the same time are to be addressed not as exclusively African issues but in their intersection with global (especially western) considerations and approaches. My focus in Chapter Three is on how elements of literary studies might be reconceptualized in terms of African cultural studies. More specifically, I outline a reconceptualization of drama as an element of African cultural studies. This entails a reversal of the traditional (received, western) place of drama in literary studies as at best a dubious genre of literature (in relation to poetry and prose which are considered legitimate literary genres). My main argument here is that performance in general is central to both cultural studies and African creative expression. Conversely, even though orality remains underutilized in western cultural studies, it is traditionally the most dominant and widespread form of African creative expression. Thus I assign to orality and drama as performance the role of being pivotal genres of African cultural studies. In terms of politics, groundedness, and pedagogy, my argument is that drama taught and studied as an element of African cultural studies ought to have a considerable emphasis on performance; and although imported plays can and should be studied, there should be an emphasis on addressing local issues.

I do not put forward the concept of drama as cultural studies in abstract terms but locate my discussion in the specific case of educational issues in Sierra Leone and the "A" level literature program in particular. I discuss how drama as cultural studies would be taught and how such a reconceptualization could be implemented as the first step in making the transition from literary to cultural studies. However, I envision drama as cultural studies to be more than an academic subject. As an element of cultural studies it can and should be a bridge between school and community, a means of addressing local and national problems and issues, a means of raising consciousness among performers and audiences. It could also be used as a means of promoting and utilizing orature and constitute a bridge between orality and literacy in the schools. Such applications would serve to validate and utilize traditional African creative and expres-

sive forms as well as undertake the utilitarian and grounded function of addressing local and national issues and problems. In short, drama as cultural studies ought to be a combination of what Eskamp (1989) has described as "theatre in search of social change" and what O'Connor (1989) has described as "activist cultural studies."

In Chapter Four I continue with the reconceptualization of "literature" as an element of cultural studies. In his collection of essays titled *Hopes and Impediments*, Chinua Achebe (1988b) includes an interesting essay on the relationship between literature and development in Africa. While Achebe does not work in the field of cultural studies, his juxtaposition of literature and development, together with the fashioning of literature into a utilitarian subject that this juxtaposition represents, is characteristic of a cultural studies utilization of literature. In fact, therefore, a brief essay like Achebe's (1988c) "What Has Literature Got to Do With It?" could be used in making the case that several African works constitute a heuristic version of cultural studies. Following in Achebe's footsteps but taking a more overtly cultural studies approach, I examine the role literature could play in the process of social and economic development in Africa.

I bridge the high/low culture divide in my very title by appropriating Achebe's title while making a very small but not insignificant change: I title the chapter, "What's Lit Gotta Do With It?" a title that embraces both Achebe ("What Has Literature Got to Do With It?") and Tina Turner ("What's Love Gotta Do With It?"). However, my main focus in this chapter is not with the perennial western cultural studies concern with obfuscating the high/low culture divide. I am more interested in how traditional and non-traditional creative and expressive African forms come together in a reconception of "literature" as cultural studies such that literature can be harnessed in the utilitarian project of African development.

Chapter Five concludes the book in two sections: the first is devoted to more speculative aspects of what could become cultural studies, namely, the inclusion of electronic media, while the second brings together various strands of the book in retrospective assessment, pointing to aspects that contribute to the viability and possibilities of African cultural studies. The first section, therefore, points to some of the elements other than literature and orature that would contribute to the utilitarian discourse of African cultural studies. More specifically, it concentrates on exploring the status quo as well as the future possibility of the utility of visual electronic media like electronic mail, the internet, and film as aspects of African cultural studies. Interestingly, while television remains an ostentatious electronic medium in many African countries, film (whether

imported fare from the west and from India and East Asia or as a product of the growing African film industry) flourishes and is becoming increasingly important in Africa as an entertainment and communications medium. In particular, Chapter Five will concentrate on the historical and increasingly significant role that film plays in African cultural production. The evolution of such examples of transnational events as the francophone festival, FESPACO,[14] which brings together European and continental African film industries and, as Manthia Diawara (1992a) points out, now constitutes the biggest festival in Africa, is to be seen as having some bearing on the evolution of African cultural studies. Finally, I have recently discovered that certain Sierra Leonean institutions (e.g., Fourah Bay College, the University of Sierra Leone) and individuals are hooked into the internet. Because the internet is free from the censorship of governments in general, lists like "LEONENET" are fast becoming the means by which certain Sierra Leoneans within the country and abroad keep in touch with one another and exchange information about the situation in the war-torn country, recent publications by Sierra Leoneans, and discuss the country's past, present, and future sociopolitical situation. The internet is even being used as an instant publication medium through which short stories are written and disseminated and feedback sought and received.[15] These emerging uses of the internet warrant and will be accorded in-depth exploration in the chapter in terms of what they might mean for African cultural studies in cyberspace. The second section of the chapter undertakes a reconsideration of the possibility and utility of a politicized, utilitarian literature studies, puts forward further succinct but comprehensive arguments which justify the transition from literature studies in Africa to African cultural studies, and points to the factors that are likely to conspire to facilitate or retard the possibility of African cultural studies becoming a viable discourse, which contributes to the evolution of transnational cultural studies, is legitimated both within and outside the academy, and makes a significant contribution to the development of progressive education in Africa.

"The personal is political." (Carol Hanisch)

Several positions that I have taken on issues relating to language, writing, and politics are reflected in this book. One of these is my decision to write much of it in the first person and to overtly insert my viewpoints on the issues in the book. The second involves introducing personal anecdotes as introductions to some chapters. The decision to overtly incorporate the

personal in my work comes partly from an intervention that was made at my M.Ed. thesis defense. Like my B.A. dissertation and my M.A. thesis, my M.Ed. thesis was written in the third person. At my defense, a feminist faculty member, Magda Lewis, asked me why I had chosen to write my thesis in the third person. This was a very surprising question to me at the time since I had never even considered the possibility of writing in the first person. She allowed my confused mumble about having always written in the third person to stand, aware no doubt that she had shaken up my taken-for-granted approach to academic writing.

Since that intervention, I have paid close attention to the use of the first person in academic writing and have discovered that certain feminist and critical educators (acting on the notions that the personal is political and that academic work is political work) have been at the forefront of writing in the first person and inserting the personal into academic writing. I have noticed that when utilized appropriately the personal does become political: issues, positions, and perspectives which would otherwise have remained outside of the academic world can be brought in; articulations of how broad political issues affect one at the personal level can be articulated; styles that enable the placing of a human face and personal stamp on reports and analyses can be legitimated in the academy; the incidents experienced which have been either traumatic or enabling on a personal basis can be shown to be symptomatic of or illustrative of broader sociopolitical issues. I have made a political decision to write in the first person and to insert personal anecdotes where appropriate in my own work because the project undertaken here is one which came to me in large part from my own experience as a student and later as an instructor in the classroom, as a participant at conferences, and as a means of undertaking an exercise that reflected my own (multiple) political concerns and positions.

Also, I have come to the conclusion that, even though such a practice is still considered at the very least unconventional in traditional academic circles and therefore is undertaken at a price, the pedagogical and epistemological possibilities opened up by such an approach exceed the risks of employing them. First of all, employing the personal reflects and underscores the embracement of the notion that knowledge production is always inherently political and subjective. I believe that subjectivity, bias, and the limits of my knowledge are all inferred and made manifest through sustained use of the first person in writing, and this in itself constitutes something of an argument against the impossible but nonetheless hegemonic approach in academia of objectivity, impartiality, and tran-

scendent, universal knowledge. Second, employment of the personal allows one to put forward one's politics and perspectives from an engaged (in some cases even embodied) position. In such essays as Philip Corrigan's (1986/1990) "The Body of intellectuals / The Intellectual's Body" and bell hooks's (1988b) "'Whose Pussy Is This': A Feminist Comment" and her "Power to the Pussy: We Don't Wanna be Dicks in Drag" (hooks, 1994b) the authors engage quite literally with the embodiment of knowledge juxtaposed with the exploration of knowledge of their own bodies. Third, employing the personal provides me the opportunity to create new knowledge, personal knowledge, which can be juxtaposed with the more academic knowledge I am producing through my writing. Philip Corrigan (in Schenke & Wright, 1996a) points to this possibility in an interview he gave to Arleen Schenke and myself:

> we have to learn to live historically....And if you really take that seriously, which means for me to take that in terms of one's self, and not to say "let me find an academic knowledge about this" but "what knowledge do I possess myself, which is historical? And how does that bear upon my sense of my self in this present—the sense of my body in this present?" (p. 260)

Thus in reference to the discipline of history specifically, Corrigan's assertion is in part that it is possible to create new historical knowledge by drawing on one's personal and immediate knowledge and that the knowledge thus produced would be different from and impossible to achieve through exclusively "objective," established, distanced, disembodied academic ruminations.

Even with all these advantages and possibilities, however, the decision to employ the personal is not one I have taken lightly, especially since I realize that in academia, work written in the first person is generally regarded as being not as rigorous, not as serious, and not as valuable as work written in the third person.[16] Furthermore, in writing in the first person, I am actively going against the grain of my own academic training and this accounts for the fact that I appropriate and apply the feminist maxim "the personal is political" in a rather self-conscious, tentative manner. Beyond my basic lack of facility, I undertake an employment of the personal in a tentative manner because I eschew versions of personal knowledge that remain self-sufficient, undertheorized, and unpoliticized. In order for personal voice and narrative to be meaningful and rigorous, it must be open to scrutiny, it must operate in concert with a well-formulated pedagogical and political project instead of attempting to pass itself off as a self-sufficient project, and, while it can complement rigorous aca-

demic and theoretical arguments, it should not be allowed to substitute for them. Tentative, self-conscious, and unsustained though my efforts might be, I am still convinced that an approach that acknowledges that knowledge is always subjective and political and that reflects that stance in both writing style and content exemplifies my convictions and is most appropriate for the articulation of my present project.

Another political issue on which I have tried to reflect my views in the book is that of the accessibility of my writing. Progressive academic work in general and critical pedagogy in particular have always been criticized for their supposed inaccessibility, and the theoretical turn to "the posts" (postmodernism, poststructuralism, postcolonialism) in progressive discourse has only added fuel to the fire. I am familiar with the arguments marshaled to justify the language of critical pedagogy (e.g., new concepts need/breed new language, old words carry with them the baggage of old meanings, people have to work at new concepts and viewpoints, and the specificity of new language ensures one cannot undertake a superficial reading). Many of these arguments are valid, and the impatience and defensiveness of progressive practitioners is sometimes understandable (especially since much of the criticism comes from right-wing critics intent on discrediting already marginalized progressive discourses). However, I still believe it is a fundamental and in the end unacceptable irony that the language of progressive discourses often excludes and marginalizes the very people it attempts (or should attempt) to reach. With the proliferation of cultural studies, similar issues around the progressive nature of the discourse on the one hand and the exclusivity of its language on the other are being raised:

> While the people cultural studies discusses have little trouble grasping the realities of the world in which they live, they would have significant difficulty in understanding many cultural theoretical analyses of them. (Blundell, Shepherd, & Taylor, 1993, p. 5)

Of course, it is possible to counter this point with one of the many arguments that have been put forward to defend the exclusivity of the language of progressive discourses in general, namely, that one writes differently for different audiences. However, it seems to me that as part of its intervention in the academy as an anti-discipline, cultural studies ought to produce theory and research that is accessible beyond the confines of the academy. It should be possible either to write different sets of works (for the general public on the one hand and colleagues in the academy on the other) or better yet, to write in such a way as to bridge the gap between

academic and popular writing.[17] However, the problem often raised is not that progressive discourses are inaccessible to those outside the university but that they are inaccessible to all but the few academics who happen to work in the area and are familiar with certain specific theoretical works. While it could be argued that every discipline and indeed every specialization within each discipline develops certain words and phrases which become indispensable in conveying and discussing key concepts and ideas, phrases which to outsiders appear to be jargon, it remains a conspicuous irony that discourses of empowerment reproduce this tradition. At the very least, I want to attempt to create a text that is accessible across narrow academic disciplinary boundaries. I consider it particularly important to attempt to write in such a way that I can "speak" and be readily understood across disciplines and discourses since the book involves forays into such diverse areas as education (especially curriculum studies), English studies, African studies, cultural studies, literary theory and criticism, postcolonialism, development discourse, Afrocentric theory/pedagogy (loosely defined), critical theory/pedagogy, feminism, and traditional African philosophy. Also, this is a book which I intend to be accessible not only to other university faculty but to graduate and undergraduate students, to policy makers and curriculum planners, and to schoolteachers.

Cultural studies exercises are also supposed to be characterized by an emphasis on specific situations, to be conducted on issues with which the cultural studies worker is familiar and already involved in, and to reflect the politics and positions of the worker. Characteristics such as the employment of anecdotes, the use of the first person, and the overt explication of my position on the issues illustrate my long-term involvement with theoretical and pedagogical issues related to "literary" and cultural studies and reflect my politics in general and my position on the issues involved in the project in particular. The matter of specificity is more slippery: while it is true that there is much to be gained by focusing on very specific groups and situations, I believe that an albeit unsolicited universalism is attached to work produced by influential centers such as the former Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) at Birmingham and to the works of particular figures such as Raymond Williams and Stuart Hall. To my mind, part of my project is to ensure that even in its initial articulation, what I am calling African cultural studies, not be relegated to an application of existing (universalized?) models of cultural studies nor become a marginalized version of cultural studies. The book therefore involves generalizing about existing discourses of cultural studies, referring to issues and incidents as specific as personal experience,

through to issues as broad as the intervention of a generalized African cultural studies in the global history and future direction of cultural studies, and, in between, referring to issues specific to specific countries. I am willing to risk having breadth of focus seen as constituting a sacrilegious breach of the emerging traditions of cultural studies. In this matter, I am encouraged by Lawrence Grossberg (1989a) who, while acknowledging the importance of specificity in undertaking cultural studies, also declared that "'a fetishism of the local' would contradict cultural studies' commitment to explore the complex and changing relations between local contexts and larger (perhaps even global) vectors" (p. 416). As Grossberg's assertion indicates, the emphasis on the specific and the local as a cultural studies focus should not be fetishized, and more importantly, should not be insisted upon to such an extent and undertaken in such an exclusive fashion that it obscures the possibility of some figures engaging in work that attempts to deal with the intersection of the local and the global. For my project, all the different levels from the personal to the global are important.

As a Sierra Leonean, I undertake the project at hand with a sense of urgency, acutely aware that in the face of the dire economic, political, and sociocultural straits in which Africa in general and Sierra Leone in particular find themselves. In the face of these conditions, I regard this moment in history not merely as the present but as what Walter Benjamin (quoted in Simon, Dippo, & Schenke, 1991) refers to as "now time," that is, "the current moment within which a radically redemptive sense of possibility is always present" (p. 28). It is with an awareness of the transformative potential in the present that I work toward a better future. For me the future is not simply the inevitable hereafter. Rather, I take the view of Simon, Dippo and Schenke (1991) that

> The future is not a destination, a place where we will eventually end up. It is a contestable vision, a particular human judgment, which can either incite change or justify existing realities. (p. 185)

This book expresses in part my ongoing examination of how oral, written, and electronic African and non-African texts could be taken up in traditional and non-traditional educational contexts texts in such a way that they contribute to the evolution of a progressive, decolonized, and just society, within and beyond Africa. This introduction has, I hope, provided some indication of the scope of the book, the issues to be addressed, the perspective and politics reflected in the exercise, and some of the restrictions and constraints under which the project is undertaken.

Chapter One

Notes on (Re)Making Literature: Exploring the Possibility of a Utilitarian, African Literature Studies

"English is a Foreign Anguish" (Marlene Nourbese Phillip)

Picture it: Freetown, Sierra Leone, 1976. A Catholic secondary school for boys. It is five after one on a Tuesday afternoon—time for poetry. The scene is a small, beige-colored classroom (Form 5A) into which, by some miracle, 40 desks, 40 chairs, and 40 sixteen-year-old students have been crammed. All eight of the large windows are open but with the temperature hovering around 35 degrees centigrade, with no hint of a breeze, and with high humidity ("it's the humidity that kills you"), we are hot, sticky, restless, and irritable. Almost all of us are still sweaty from our 12:30 to one o'clock "lunch time" exertions on the hand tennis courts (hand tennis is my sport) and the soccer field (soccer is so boorish, really). As usual the one o'clock bell rang before we could conclude our matches, and each of us is now dealing with the frustration of "matchus interruptus" in his own way. The activity of choice for most is taking part in one of several loud arguments (in Krio of course, since we only use English when a teacher is around). Some are arguing over what the outcome of an interrupted match would have been; others are teasing opponents they had defeated in previous contests or vowing revenge on classmates who had defeated them. A few of us are making do with flicking the ears of the irritatingly bright and keen boys in the first row. Everyone is fanning away with open exercise books in the futile attempt to get cool.

Upon sighting the teacher approaching from the other end of the long, open aired corridor, the class lookout screams (it's the only way he can be heard above the raucous din) "St. Augustine dae cam!" and we all scramble to our seats. Why St. Augustine? Well, we tend to give our teachers nicknames and this particular teacher, who also teaches history, is famous for his spirited rendition of the following line from the Form 2 history book: "As St. Augustine lay dying, the Barbarians were beating upon the gates of the city of Hippo." He has become famous for this and

other speeches, and it is not uncommon for students from other classes to hang out outside his class and peek in through the window to capture one of his theatrical readings.

By the time St. Augustine appears at the door, the bedlam has come to an abrupt halt, replaced by a studious quietness, punctuated with the orderly sound of pages being flicked as we search for our "place" in the text. St. Augustine walks briskly to his desk, narrating on the way in a loud voice and from memory the poem we are to discuss that day. This exhibitionist illustration of his prodigious long-term memory is designed to amaze and impress the class—and it never fails!

"St. Agnes' Eve, ah bitter chill it was
The owl for all his feathers was a-cold
And the hare limped trembling through
The frozen grass..."

My classmates are whispering the usual noises of appreciation of his performance. "Haaaaay," they murmur at the end of every line, "haaaaaay, haaaaaay." Somehow, my heart is not in it. I am thinking about the scene the teacher is painting for us. Just how cold is that? I wonder to myself, risking a reprimand by turning my attention away from the teacher (who is continuing his rendition of Keats from his desk) to stare outside for inspiration. I am mildly surprised to see eight shirtless, sweating fourth formers still playing an intense game of soccer, risking suspension from school to achieve a decisive conclusion to their game. It's probably colder than a harmattan morning, I bet. Perhaps it is as cold as the inside of a fridge? Colder? Cold as inside a freezer? Surely not! Surely nothing and nowhere could be colder than the inside of a freezer. I tune in to the teacher again while still watching the game.

"...Numb were the beadsman's fingers while
He told his rosary... this patient, holy man.
And his pious breath rose to heaven
Like incense from a censer old..."

The teacher's boisterous rendition of Keats is matched by his bouncy, business-like strides as he moves toward his desk. My classmates continue to punctuate each line from him with their appreciative murmurs of "haaaay," "haaaaaay," "haaaaaaaay." Yeah, but how cold is that? I continue to wonder about this as I watch the ball throw up a little puff of red dust each time it bounces on the bald, red soccer field. The field is bald from non-stop soccer matches which have left the reddish-brown laterite

soil exposed all over it, except for a vague, sad fringe of shriveled brown grass. Wiping sweat from my forehead with my forearm (only sissies carry hankies, and I assure you I am no sissy), I stare beyond the field to the horizon which shimmers and dances in the hot, bright midday sun. Perhaps it would feel like being covered all over with ice lollies, I conclude in desperation as I blow surreptitiously into my open shirt front to cool my chest, and press my back into my chair to halt a particularly ticklish rivulet of sweat running down my spine.

I wrest my eyes from the window when I notice the silence. The class is no longer murmuring, and even more ominous, the loquacious St. Augustine has actually gone quiet. I look around to find him standing right beside my desk, glaring down at me. My heart sinks. I'm in trouble for not "paying attention." Besides, his monologue ended, St. Augustine is about to use me to maintain the attention of the rest of the class. He keeps an eye on me because I am one of the boys who "has potential in literature studies" but who allows himself to be led astray by the "unserious boys." The class of course senses "a moment" and their collective gaze is fixed on me too. I wonder how long they've all been watching me and make a mental note to give my "friend" sitting next to me a sharp elbow in the side for not warning me about this.

"Perhaps Handel would rather be outside playing soccer," St. Augustine says, glaring down at me.

The class, knowing what a hopeless soccer player I am, roars with laughter.

"No sir," I mumble, screwing my face into the expected half smile (in acknowledgment of his albeit unintended witticism) and half frown (in acknowledgment of his reprimand).

"Have you been with us at all?"

"Yes sir!" I exclaim with just the right amount of acceptable indignation in my voice.

"Do you have any questions?" he persists, prolonging my unsolicited and unwanted time in the spotlight.

Yes! I thought. As a matter of fact, I do have a question. Just how bloody cold is it when the grass gets frozen and your fingers get numb and your breath gets to rise like incense from a censer old? But I know this is neither an appropriate nor an intelligent question to ask in a literature class (or in any class for that matter).

"No sir," I say, putting on my best bright-and-eager-to-learn face in the hope of ending all this unfair attention.

"Good. Now if you will pay attention to the text and to what is happening in the class, you just might learn something for a change," concludes the teacher as he turns his back and heads back to his desk.

"Ooooooooooooooooooooooooooh!" go the bad boys at the back, their faces twisted in mock pain, signaling that they are extending the meaning of the teacher's jab to a challenge, one which I cannot, indeed dare not resist taking up.

"Fuck off," I mouth slowly, silently and good-naturedly at the teacher's back, making a sweeping gesture with my hand to include the entire class. I am rewarded with chuckles of approval from the bad boys and scandalized looks from the bright keeners in the first row. For good measure, I take one last, long, albeit surreptitious glance outside. The vice-principal has emerged from his office and is running onto the field in a vain attempt to catch the fourth-form soccer players who, like a well-trained guerrilla unit, have grabbed their once white uniform shirts and are scattering in many different directions, putting considerable distance between themselves and the school. Some are scaling the high wall dividing the school from a cemetery, others are running down the school drive to the main road, while others still have used their school bags to protect their hands and leaped over the barbed wire fence into the police barracks grounds and are sprinting across the police barracks' green, well-kept sports field. All are completely indistinguishable since they are all wearing only shorts and sneakers, and, for good measure, have thrown their once white shirts over their heads like head scarves, so they can't even be recognized by their different haircuts.

Satisfied with the steps I have taken to maintain my reputation with my classmates, I turn my attention back to St. Augustine, who is now back at his desk. The class continues with the whole first row of keeners raising their hands to answer some question the teacher has asked.

"...wandering in the mystic rhythm of jungle drums and the concerto." (Gabriel Okara)

It is not difficult to see how the personal experiences I pointed to in the Introduction as roots of my project are examples of pervasive problems inherent in literature studies in Africa. The problem I as a Sierra Leonean youth in the intense heat of a tropical afternoon had with conceptualizing and relating to Keats' description of a winter scene, for example, is symptomatic of the fact that, as Obah points out, the bulk of the material taught in Africa is foreign and alienating. This in turn is a direct conse-

quence of the fact that literature studies in many African countries is, to a great extent, still colonized. In anglophone West Africa (Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Ghana, the Gambia), for example, the vast majority of texts studied at every level are still selected from the British canon. The assertion of WAEC in its "A" Level syllabus (1989) that its selections are made from works which "are considered to be among the best in the different periods and styles" (p. 170) is an indication of how the western (specifically British) way of categorizing texts is perpetuated in Africa. The periods referred to are British (e.g., Elizabethan literature) and so are the styles (i.e., the traditional western genres and conceptions of poetry, prose, and drama). These works depict landscapes, cultures, and peoples the African student is often left to capture and understand only through the imagination. While it could be argued that the imagination is precisely what is to be employed in literary appreciation, it must be understood that possession of relevant background knowledge of aspects of the context of texts is crucial in assisting in both affective and cognitive aspects of appreciation. The African student cannot bring her or his background knowledge to bear in appreciating texts from this British tradition since the depictions are not of African landscapes, climes, peoples, and cultures.

All of this does not preclude the possibility of the African student coming to appreciate and even love English literature texts. Certainly, in my own case, I grew to love literature in general and works like Dickens' *Great Expectations*, Pope's "Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot," and Shakespeare's *Macbeth* in particular. However, such love came at the expense of reading and appreciating African works; it involved not only a love for canonical British works but also the acceptance of the notion that British works were literature while only a few African works qualified to be considered literature. Because my literature syllabi consisted mostly of British texts (with a few American and African texts thrown in at various levels of my education), I developed a love for English works, but also came to believe that England had a rich history of literature and criticism while Africa had a "tradition" that hardly went as far back as the late colonial period. My love of literature taught me something about the English language, English society, English history, and English manners and mores, but it afforded me scarce opportunity indeed to study or discuss African languages, African societies, African history, African manners. Literary appreciation demanded that I cut myself off from my Africanness and immerse myself in what my imagination could construct as British society, history, issues of concern, and ways of seeing and being in the world.

As a "successful" student of literature, my relationship with literature (more accurately, English literature) could best be described as one characterized by the (post?)colonial feelings of "love/hate, comprehending but not fully understanding, belonging and not belonging" that Homi Bhabha (1994) would describe as "ambivalence."

The effects, therefore, of the marginalization not only of African works but also of African aesthetics, approaches, and non-literary forms in literature studies in Africa on students and on the viability of literature studies in Africa is not to be underestimated. Conversely, the existence and serious appreciation of African literature demands quite significant, even revolutionary, changes to literary criticism. In his essay on the (potential) impact of African literature on the international discourse of literary criticism, Christopher Miller (1993) has observed that the study of African literature "demands nothing less than a reconsideration of all the terms of literary analysis, starting with the word 'literature' itself, and...such a reconsideration is the best thing that can happen in the field" (p. 217). Furthermore, Abiola Irele (1990) has observed that African works, especially traditional African works of orature, do not readily lend to Eurocentric historicizing in the tradition of literary history:

> In the restricted sense of a precise documentation of the growth and development of themes and features within the oral tradition, literary history is, in the circumstances, not always possible or easy... (p. 12)

It could also be pointed out that African written work like Tutuola's (1952) *The Palm-Wine Drinkard and His Dead Palm-Wine Tapster in the Dead's Town* defies classification in the traditional Eurocentric genres. *The Palm Wine Drinkard* is a mythological tale but is too short to be a mythical saga. It is in the form of a short story yet obviously reads more as a performance piece, which should make it drama. The language it is written in can be recognized only in the most superficial sense as English since the author has only a few years of schooling in English (yet writes with the self-assurance and enthusiasm of an accomplished traditional storyteller).[1] Even more contemporary works like Okot p'Bitek's (1966) "Song of Lawino" simultaneously incorporate elements of traditional African storytelling forms, African traditional praise poetry, and European poetry conventions. Is p'Bitek's work a story or music lyrics or poetry? If we want to reduce the complex form to poetry, what genre of poetry is it? It is in fact virtually impossible to pigeonhole p'Bitek's "Song of Lawino" and "Song of Ocol" (1984) in terms of European (and indeed African) classifications of poetry. What is to be made of the work of a

playwright like Penina Muhando, who actively disregards western conventions and incorporates various forms of traditional African performance such that the latter sections of all her plays end up being a hybrid form involving dance, drumming, recitation, and storytelling? Can her works (e.g., *Hatia [Guilt]*; *Harakati za Ukombozi [Liberation Struggles]*) be studied as drama texts in the literature sense, with the necessity for and emphasis on a fully written text that this approach demands?

Despite the complex issues around literary historicizing and genre classification raised by African works, WAEC and other literature syllabus developers have simply added African works to existing, western-dominated syllabi. In the case of Fourah Bay College (University of Sierra Leone), the English Department has added African sections to its predominantly and unabashedly Anglocentric courses in literature or created entire courses in African literature but only to supplement a program in English that is still predominantly British in content and in its approach to literary appreciation.

The problems I had with my M.A. thesis reflect the fact that the emphasis African writers and critics place on the utilitarian nature of African literature (as opposed to a concentration on aesthetics) goes against the grain of the hegemonic western emphasis on aesthetics and art-for-art's-sake.[2] While I had personally only stumbled on this fact, it raises a much wider issue about what the approach should be to the appreciation of African works of literature. Further, it raises the problem of how Africans respond to received literary aesthetics given that our values and our sense of what is beautiful or profound, for example, are often very different from those propounded in western literary aesthetics. For example, while many traditional African forms (especially religious orature) rely heavily on repetition and are regarded not only as beautiful but also as profound, this very characteristic of repetition would incline the Eurocentrically trained critic to dismiss such works as plodding, unpoetic, and non-literary.[3] Lastly, my almost instinctive yet tentative attempt to mix politics and sociocultural analysis with literature goes against the grain of the traditional western concept of literature as a self-contained self-sufficient entity. However, my attempt is in keeping with the African notion that African literature is functional and that African writers write to directly address the problems faced by their societies.

This notion of the African writer as social and political commentator is exemplified in the following statement by Wole Soyinka:

> I have a special responsibility because I can smell the reactionary sperm years before the rape of the nation takes place. (quoted in Gibbs, ed., 1980, p. 11)

Abiola Irele (1990) has picked up the issue and pointed, if somewhat less dramatically and less colorfully than Soyinka, to a similar responsibility for the African literary critic:

> I would argue that [the commitment of African writers to pragmatic issues over aesthetic ones] enjoins upon the African critic an obligation to take account of the writers' striving towards a meaning that reaches beyond the formal modes of signification discoverable within their works in order to engage a felt universe of life, a world involved more than ever in the tensions of a historical process whose outcome is of the greatest import for us as Africans. (Irele, 1990, pp. xiii-xiv)

These exhortations of both writers and critics have not necessarily translated into the evolution of a particularly pragmatic/utilitarian literary practice or literature studies in Africa, principally, I believe, because the pressures of the hegemony of European approaches have meant Africans have either rejected a pragmatic/utilitarian approach in criticism and literature studies or else they have engaged in such approaches in a decidedly tentative and haphazard manner. For example, while Eldred Durosimi Jones (1973a, 1973b) was instrumental in examining Wole Soyinka's works in the light of the establishment of a postcolonial African literary tradition, he was also equally concerned with insisting on Soyinka's "universal" appeal and in showing that the very characteristics that made English literary works "great literature" existed in Soyinka's works also. Similarly, while African literature is included in the WAEC Ordinary and Advanced level literature syllabi, students are expected in their appreciation to approach the African texts in precisely the same manner as they would the European texts.

Given the problems posed by the juxtaposition of African literature and orature and suggested African approaches to criticism and literature studies, and given the hegemony of Eurocentric literary historicizing, criticism, and literature studies, the issues I am raising and beginning to address in this chapter in relation to the creation of an African framework for approaching/appreciating literature are these: what steps are necessary to decolonize literature studies in Africa? What would a decolonized, relevant, and nationalist African literature studies look like? What would literature studies look like if guided by the worldviews, cultures, values, and concerns of African communities? How can literature be taught so that it reflects the approaches and concerns of African writers, contributes to the evolution of a united, just, fair, compassionate, and truly democratic Africa, and fosters African nationalism in students? What, in short, would a utilitarian literature studies in Africa look like? Addressing these issues

requires a critical reexamination of everything from what is considered literature to how literature is taught in the classroom, from an explication of African "literary" aesthetics to the question of canons and canonization, from an attempt to set some boundaries around what is to be considered African literature to an explication of how literature studies can be used in the service of the promotion of African unity, from an explication of African literary criticism to an illustration of the relevance of African literature criticism to (Pan-) Africanism. In the space of a single chapter I can only give pointers to how some of these issues can be raised and addressed. The best place to begin this task in my opinion is from a stance where nothing is taken for granted, nothing (especially neither literature nor African culture) is essentialized and/or romanticized.

"Why we should want to engage [literature and literary criticism] in the first place." (Terry Eagleton)

Is it unacceptable or simply unconventional to mix "real-life" issues (let alone politics) and literary criticism? This question is crucial for me because it strikes at the heart of my concerns. Significant as it is, however, it is a question which I have attempted to address while still operating within the discourse of "English studies." In other words, I have allowed myself to be restricted by the supposed limits of a particular discourse (hegemonic English studies) while trying to use that same discourse to address issues (African unity, promotion of an African identity, etc.) which appear to fall outside of it. While I was convinced that my approach in my M.A. thesis was or ought to be acceptable and legitimate, I could only conclude from operating within the discourse of "literature studies" that it was at least unconventional if not "wrong."

What I needed to do was to deconstruct literature studies not from within, but as Tony Bennet (1990) puts it, from a position "inside/outside literature." Being at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education and immersed in the discipline of education, while still working on literature studies issues, allowed me to operate within and between educational discourse (especially critical pedagogy and cultural studies) on the one hand and the discourse of literature and literary criticism on the other. In other words, I have been able to position myself inside/outside literature (though in a somewhat different sense than Bennet meant). It is from this position that I have been able to take what Terry Eagleton (1983) describes as a strategic approach to literary criticism. As he explains it, "this means asking first not what the object is or how we should approach

it, but why we should want to engage it in the first place" (p. 210). It is from this advantageous and illuminating position that I will engage the issues involved in my project.

Taking Eagleton's advice, I assert that my primary purpose for engaging literature and literary criticism is to promote an African project of possibility. Far from attempting to perpetuate the false dichotomy between the "world of the text" and "the real world," I wish to illustrate how literature studies can be utilized in interrogating African (and non-African) cultures and fostering a notion of African identity in students. Thus, I assign an overtly political role to literature studies. Alan Wald (1989) and Terry Eagleton (1983) are just two examples of western critics who have exposed the hypocrisy of attempting to divorce literature from politics. As they assert, literature and even Standard English were created for specific political reasons and continue to serve the interests of particular groups even in their supposedly apolitical contemporary manifestations. The inherent (though largely unacknowledged) political nature of literature studies in general and the overtly functional approach that African writers and critics stress validate my stance. In the case of African criticism, I am advocating the development of an approach which would more closely reflect the utilitarian/pragmatic focus of African literature. Irele (1990) is only one of several African critics who have already articulated both the rationale for a politicized, utilitarian criticism which more closely reflects Africa's politicized literature and a description of what undertaking such a criticism might entail:

> The manifest concern of the writers to speak to the immediate issues of social life, to narrate the tensions that traverse their world—to relate their imaginative expression to their particular universe of experience in all its existential concreteness—this seems to me to leave the African critic with hardly any choice but to give precedence to the powerful referential thrust of our literature: it is only at the risk of deviating from the determined direction of this literature that one can disregard its gesture towards a focused and particularized meaning, its expressed implication in the collective experience (p. xiv)

"[Literary aesthetics is] Really useless knowledge." (Tony Bennet)

It is possible to take up literature as sociopolitical comment, thus emphasizing its utilitarian value over its more traditionally propounded aesthetic value. This does not imply an unreflexive endorsement of Tony Bennet's (1990) dismissal of aesthetics as "really useless knowledge." I believe a notion of aesthetics as an end in itself is, in the end, useless

knowledge. However, I also think that it makes little sense to speak of literature without speaking of what in a work gives one pleasure, what one finds beautiful or moving, in short, some notion of the aesthetic value of the work. It is important to note, though, that I employ a much altered conception of "aesthetics" and assign it a strategic and much more limited role than it plays in received traditional western criticism.

African aesthetics are often different from western aesthetics, and this dichotomy has important consequences for literary appreciation. For example, while western writers avoid using common sayings and proverbs because they are frowned upon as clichés, Chinua Achebe has declared that "proverbs are the palm oil with which African literature is eaten." Several works that deal either exclusively or in part with the aesthetics of African literature and how African literature is to be taken up have been written by continental Africans (e.g., Taiwo, 1967; Soyinka, 1976; Chinweizu, Jemie, & Madubuike, 1983, Irele, 1990), Africanists in the diaspora (e.g., Dathorne, 1975) and, western critics (e.g., Sartre, 1949b/1988b). Each of these works has its shortcomings, however, as far as articulating a comprehensive African aesthetics is concerned. For example, Soyinka draws principally on the values and worldview of one group (the Yoruba of Nigeria); Sartre deals only with one type of African literature (Negritude); and while Chinweizu, Jemie, and Madubuike deal extensively with the topic, they do not relate African aesthetics to non-African literature. Also, none of these critics are concerned with pedagogy per se. I want to go further than these critics' concern with literary criticism to make the connection I believe ought to be made between African aesthetics and the teaching of literature in the African classroom. It is possible to draw on these earlier works to attempt to identify criteria which would enable one to begin to articulate a critical African aesthetics and to further try to illustrate how a critical African aesthetics could be employed in the reading of not only African works but non-African works as well. It is also possible to go beyond the notion of literary criticism to discuss the significance and practical application of critical African aesthetics for literature studies in schools and colleges.

My emphasis on utilitarian value is meant to venture beyond a consideration of aesthetics as a distinct, self-sufficient discourse to a consideration of function/utility and overt politics. However, my intention is not to replace an aesthetics-driven discourse with a purely materialist discourse. While a purely aesthetics-driven discourse would fail to be utilitarian, a purely materialist discourse would be far too narrow for my purposes here and would not allow for a serious, sustained examination of the

aesthetic aspects of literature. My emphasis, therefore, is on the intersection between aesthetics, function/utility, and politics. By "function/utility" I mean to reference the primacy of the African writer's role as a sociopolitical commentator or even teacher in the community.[4] I also mean to reference what Colin Mercer (1991) describes as "technique," that is, determining in what circumstances and in which differing ways individual readers (and I would add communities of readers) "read" a work and how and to what extent they make use of what they read in their day-to-day life. By "overtly political aesthetics" I mean to reference the bridging of the aesthetics/politics divide undertaken by critics like Arun Mukherjee (1988), in her construction of what she calls "an aesthetics of opposition," and Udenta Udenta (1993) in his African version of "revolutionary aesthetics." While the notion of utilitarian value is applicable to literature in the traditional European sense (i.e., works in print), I believe it is particularly applicable to African performance and orature forms.

Significant as it is, especially in the appreciation of African literature, I believe the notion of function has been reduced to a narrow analysis of class and social justice in the work of certain African Marxist critics. Greg Gugelberger (1985b), sums up this brand of criticism as a search for "facts, history, class consciousness, radical transformation of African society, the question of for/against whom...[literature is written]" (p. 17). Basically this sums up much of the approach I am advocating. However, in the end, these criteria by themselves are too narrow. They do not deal with the fact that literature can be and often is engaged for pleasure, even for escapism; they do not deal with the fact that pure social transformation is hardly a significant criterion of traditional African forms; they do not take into account the importance of myth and the fact that African worldviews almost always involve an element of the mythical. When this narrow set of criteria is applied to African literature, many works that are not overtly Marxist or materialist are declared unimportant and, perhaps more dangerous, un-African. Illustrative of this is the fact that Wole Soyinka remains the favorite whipping boy of this school of criticism (as evidenced in collections of Marxist essays such as Gugelberger, 1985b).

A materialist critique is crucial, but to reduce literary criticism to a consideration of little else is to miss out on much of the essence of both literature and literary criticism. What I am advancing here is a three-pronged approach to appreciating texts, one which rejects the conventional notion that there is a rigid dichotomy between "the world of the text" and "the real world." I want to insist that (as Edward Said, 1982, Wole Soyinka, 1976, and Colin Mercer, 1991, assert) the two worlds are

inextricably linked.[5] Further, I am attempting to avoid the pitfalls of both the art-for-art's-sake notion of aesthetics and the purely materialist notion of function, attempting to achieve instead what I feel is the multi-faceted potential of literature studies.

"Whose canon is it anyway?" (Henry Louis Gates, Jr.)

The adherence of African institutions to the western canon is one of many taken-for-granted, "natural" aspects of our education which crumble into ludicrousness under closer examination. Eagleton (1983) is one western literary critic who has exposed "the great tradition" of "national literature" as a construct, fashioned by particular people for particular reasons at particular historical junctures. I endorse Eagleton's point that there is no neutral yardstick by which texts are judged for inclusion in western canons and that because the canon was constructed to serve the interests of certain groups in a given society, it ends up excluding (or grossly underrepresenting) the works of certain groups (e.g., African Americans, Native Americans, Latinos and Latinas, Asian Americans, and women in general in the case of the American canon). While I understand Eagleton's objections (shared by an increasing majority of white western radical critics) to the canon and the whole notion of canonization, I do not endorse his call for the demise of the canon for two main reasons. First, despite the protestations and strongly and persuasively articulated arguments against canons by critics like Eagleton, canons are in fact inevitable. Even in a field like critical pedagogy, which attempts to bring in the popular and to resist the hierarchization of knowledge forms, the figures who advocate such stances (e.g., Paulo Freire) have, ironically, become canonical themselves.[6] In the field of literature studies the fact that Eagleton's works have become a "must read" in progressive circles and courses is an ironic testimony to the inevitability of canons. The inevitability of canons means that what is important is not so much the eradication of canons (an impossible task in my view) but rather an examination and revision of the process of canon formation and the construction of more representative canons. Secondly, canons can be made to serve strong progressive political purposes, ones which are radically different from the current elitist, exclusionary, and hegemonic purposes they serve in the west and to which radical critics object so strongly. The argument I make for developing and promoting African canons in this section, therefore, is based on these two considerations (i.e., the inevitability of canons and the progressive potential utility of canons). My argument is not that none of the political aims

I ascribe to African canons cannot be fulfilled otherwise but rather that canons constitute the most efficacious means of fulfilling them and that bypassing canons in fact leaves unanswered the question of how to avoid reproducing the problematic aspects of Eurocentric canons in emerging African canons.

The process of the establishment of an African canon, or hopefully, a number of African canons, is underway and ongoing. It is not altogether negative that the effort does not appear centralized or sustained since the result of its being the product of an uncoordinated variety of projects, it is more likely that an interesting multiplicity of African canons rather than one hegemonic canon are being produced. Projects which are contributing to the canonization of certain texts and authors include the identification and collection of traditional African epics (e.g., John Johnson et al., 1997), compilations of anthologies of contemporary African works (e.g., Oladele Taiwo, 1984), compilations of biographies of selected writers (e.g., Janheinz Jahn et al., 1972), the selection of specific authors and works for literary criticism, the documentation and discussion of a literary tradition (e.g., Wanjala, 1988), the explicit advocacy for the inclusion of marginalized groups in the canon (e.g., Florence Stratton, 1994), and the selection of specific texts and authors for school and university courses in literature and African studies on the African continent (e.g., Bernth Lindfors, 1990) and elsewhere (e.g., Elizabeth Gunner, 1990).

I feel strongly that rather than attempting the impossible task of doing away with the canon, Africans should work to ensure that our canons are sensitive to social difference and are truly representative of the many groups that make up our societies. Such factors as the underrepresentation of women writers in early African anthologies point to the possibility that the mistakes of the western canons are being repeated in African canons. However, other developments such as the emergence of a canon of women writers and critical works devoted to the treatment of women and gender issues in general in African literature (e.g., Stratton, 1994; Jones, Palmer, & Jones, 1987) and to the works of women writers in particular (e.g., Newell, 1997; Davies & Graves, 1986) point to the fact that Africans do believe in the value of the concept of the canon, and some are making serious efforts to ensure that African canons are truly representative of the continent's many different groups and interests.

It is painfully ironic that even in the face of the emerging African canons and the exciting work to be done in their development, we Africans still adhere to the western canon as the core of our literature studies. By adding African works to a syllabus based on and dominated by

the received canon (as Obah, 1982, recommends), we appear to be adding African works to the western canon. This is somewhat like adding talking drums to a symphony orchestra: the African might hear a few familiar sounds in the music, but the form, tempo, and so on will remain foreign, and the talking drums are sure to sound out of place. How can we add our works to the "great tradition" of others? Why would we want to, especially given that there are emergent African canons? Why should we contribute to bringing African works under what Wole Soyinka (1976) dismisses as "a fiat of instant-assimilation poetics?" (p. 63).

Since its publication in 1997, the *Norton Anthology of African American Literature* has become a repository of selected African American "texts" and in effect has been part of the process of the creation of an African American canon. Prior to its publication, Henry Louis Gates (its eventual co-general editor, together with Nellie McKay) articulated a strong case for an African American canon. In making his case, Gates (1990a, 1990b) describes himself as having to negotiate "a position between those on the cultural right who claim that Black literature can have no canon, no masterpieces, and those on the cultural left who wonder why anyone wants to establish the existence of a canon, any canon, in the first place" (1990b, p. 4). I have no doubt that there are those who believe (though they would not necessarily declare) that Africans can have no canon, no masterpieces. What I have personally encountered, however, is an almost overwhelming pressure from progressive white EuroAmerican academics to abandon the project of affirming and promoting African canons. The by now all-too-familiar arguments are these: canons are exclusionary, canons are elitist, canons serve the hegemonic interests of specific (especially dominant) groups in society, canons celebrate high culture and language and denigrate popular culture and language, canons perpetuate a very partial picture of what is valuable in a given culture, and so on, *ad infinitum*.

These objections to canons and hence to canon formation and promotion are quite significant; and when they are put forward as cautionary statements designed to alert me to the fact that canons and canon formation are fraught with danger, I take them seriously. However, African canons need not be constructed in the same fashion, need not employ the same criteria, and need not result in the same set of problems inherent in western canons. Also, some of the problems of western canons become radically altered in the African context. Just to give one example, instead of a dichotomy between high and low language, Africans will have to contend with the issue of the dichotomy between works written in the lan-

guages of the former colonizers and those written in African languages. As far as this specific example is concerned, the criterion for inclusion of works written in European languages might be an ability on the part of the writer to transcend the boundaries of that language, to lend the cadence and rhythm of African languages to a European language.[7]

I am increasingly frustrated at another aspect of the objections raised, namely, my apparent lack of success in persuading white radical academics of what I consider the absolute political and sociocultural necessity of canon formation and promotion for "Others," (specifically Africans). I believe a case can be made for the strategic utility and necessity of African canons and canon formation. The first and perhaps least significant use I have for an African canon is to employ it in pointing out to the non-African (and the unfortunate African) who believes that we do not have a canon, "Here's our canon!" This might appear to be a superficial goal until one takes into account the fact that, irrespective of how arbitrary and biased a criterion this is, "great" art and literature are still considered to be the "universal" hallmark of a people's greatness.[8] I recognize that this argument could be seen as falling into the trap of dealing with the concerns of Eurocentric literati who are invested in dismissing or disclaiming the existence or significance of African literary production. My response to this charge is that it is in some ways a deviation from our main task, but nonetheless a necessary evil, to address such voices of denial of our very humanity and our contribution to global culture. To leave these views unaddressed is an indulgence Africans cannot afford, since these views represent the continued attempt to marginalize Africans and our cultural production. Although expressed in more subtle terms in contemporary times, the presumption of Africans' lack of (high) culture still exists: there are those, as Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1987) once put it, who believe that "Africa [is] for all practical purposes, ...the land of savagery and continuous darkness. No history. No culture. No literature" (p. 9). Also, as Abiola Irele (1990) has pointed out, Africans have not created modern African literature and criticism in isolation or outside of the gaze and judgment of the European tradition. Taking these two issues together, it is clear that it is a necessary and unavoidable part of the project of articulating African positions to consider the continued interaction between African traditions, on the one hand, and the hegemony of Eurocentric traditions (both in their complementary and dismissive versions), on the other. A crucial aspect of this process involves the active, systematic construction and establishment of African literary traditions and canons, which can be juxtaposed with their European counterparts.

A second use I have for an African canon or canons is the practical goal of having Africans take control of what is defined as African literature and of their gaining some influence over what gets taught as African literature, especially outside of the continent. For Africans and non-Africans alike, a body of works that has been identified as canonical, or dare I say it, classical, will serve as a basis on which to draw, in including African works in a syllabus or in drawing up a syllabus for African literature. In other words an African canon, constructed by Africans, is needed to drive or at least inform a syllabus on African literature, especially for courses and programs at institutions outside of the continent. The alternative is to leave the selection of which African works are to be considered significant and worth studying entirely up to whoever is drawing up the syllabus. Syllabi are inextricably linked to the process of canon formation, not only as repositories of canonical texts but as part of the machinery of canon formation and perpetuation.[9] Helen Harper (1988) has pointed out that every time a syllabus is drawn up, a canon (albeit in a weak, limited sense of the word) is set up for that course. It follows, then, that in not having African canons, we as Africans would not only be failing to influence which African works are selected as worth studying within and more importantly outside Africa, but more significantly, we would be leaving the formation of the African canon largely in the hands of non-Africans.

Finally, I would want African students of literature to have access to our canons, our "commonplace book of our shared culture, in which we have written down the texts and titles that we want to remember, that had some special meaning for us" (Gates, 1990b, p. 92). This to me is the most significant use to which an African canon can be put since it represents a contribution to the project of African unity and intracontinental cultural dialogue. Henry Louis Gates's statement appears to suggest that there is a homogeneous, essential African American set of values and therefore a homogeneous, essential set of texts that are valuable to all African Americans. I would argue, rather, that in the case of both African American and continental African literature, there is of necessity a complex web of interests, regional and ethnic values, and individual and communal sociopolitical interests represented in an African readership, and that there would therefore need to be not a single African canon but a number of African canons. What I am arguing for, therefore, is not a closed, singular African canon but a number of African canons which would take their place among a global multiplicity of canons. It is possible, for example, for Africans to develop canons based on national bound-

aries, broader regional boundaries, language distinctions, or gender considerations, or indeed, on potentially interesting combinations of these categories.

Canons and the process of canon formation have been rendered problematic in some circles because of everything from contentions over what authors and texts have been and should be represented in the canon(s) to the exclusion of minorities and women from canons and decision-making in terms of canon formation, from the elitism of canons to the dubiousness of the criteria utilized in determining which works enter the canon and which do not. The development of several African canons would contribute to a global multiplicity of canons, a concept which is not just wishful thinking on my part but what I see as a process that is already ongoing, one which will evolve into a solution of the problem of the canon and the process of canon formation. Once manifest, a global multiplicity of canons will neutralize to a great extent the hegemonic power and hence controversial nature of such monolithic concepts as "the American canon." Simultaneously, it will give people the opportunity to gain easy access to the works that may be of interest to them and that they already identify as important and even "classic" given their personal and communal values, interests, and concerns. (I would contend that such a set of works, whether defined on a communal or even a personal basis, and irrespective of what label we find politically acceptable, is a canon.)

While these recommendations address written texts, they do not necessarily apply as readily to performance and orature forms. In terms of traditional works of orature, the classics have already been determined in a much more participatory manner than that employed in the selection of texts for inclusion in the written, elitist canon. In other words, while evaluation of works and determination of inclusion in or exclusion from the literary canon are the purview of a handful of literati, the inclusion/exclusion of oral texts is determined in the case of secular "texts" by a communal decision based on popular demand. However, the preservation and dissemination of oral and performance forms pose significant obstacles. How is one to capture a Yoruba (Nigerian) Egungun masquerade performance, for example, and share it with students in Durban, South Africa? As a visual as well as oral performance, an Egungun performance can be adequately captured neither through written transcription nor through audio recording. While filming or videotaping offer the best possibilities of capturing such an event, they do bring up the perennial problem of being prohibitively costly (especially in the case of videotaping) in terms of the equipment institutions would have to acquire in order to

view such a performance. Ironically, therefore, traditional forms which are most readily and affordably accessible at a local level become the most prohibitively expensive forms to record and disseminate. Also, the production, dissemination, and appreciation of such texts would require a media studies-influenced, hybrid set of background knowledge, skills, and approaches rather than those demanded by traditional literature. These factors should be seen, however, not only as problems but also as challenges that have to be addressed, since they represent not only obstacles to be overcome but also opportunities for broadening the range of forms and genres of study in "literature studies."

"[Do I subscribe to a literary ideology?]—a social vision, yes, but not a literary ideology." (Wole Soyinka)

Soyinka once declared himself puzzled by the rather contradictory emphasis on ideology as a decisive factor in literary appreciation. In particular he pointed to the fact that literati appeared to exhibit a rather fickle alliance to particular ideologies, rejecting each current ideology once a new and therefore apparently more fashionable one comes along:

> When the reigning ideology fails finally to retain its false comprehensive adequacy, it is discarded. A new set, inviolable mould is fabricated to contain the current body of literature or to stimulate the next along predetermined patterns. (Soyinka, 1976, p. 62).

Although Soyinka makes the statement about a preference for a social vision rather than a literary ideology as a guiding principle in relation to his own creative work, the same skepticism about the usefulness of literary ideologies guides his criticism as well. In fact, his critique of literary ideology quoted here is not simply personal but reflective of the stance of many African literary critics. The primacy of function in African literature and literary criticism is probably the single most important factor responsible for the resistance of African writers and critics to "European" literary ideologies. However, I wish to illustrate that African critics like Soyinka are involved in the production and implementation of theory and ideology despite their protestations.

In taking the position that he does not subscribe to a literary ideology, Soyinka is obviously taking up ideology as a set of beliefs which one can choose to profess or reject. As Catherine Belsey (1980) has illustrated, however, we are all subjects of ideology in its more pervasive sense, that is, as "the very condition of our experience of the world, unconscious pre-

cisely in that it is unquestioned, taken for granted" (p. 5). As far as this latter conception of ideology is concerned, literary criticism is itself inherently ideological (Eagleton, 1983) and as a subject of literary discourse (in which the ideology of literature and literary criticism is inscribed), Soyinka is in fact operating within the ideology of literary criticism.

What Soyinka could more accurately claim is that he is consciously guided within the discourse of criticism more by his social vision than by an overt ideology of literary critics such as conservatism or Marxism. However, even this approach is theoretical (even though it emphasizes the practical), and as Deanne Bogdan (1990) asserts, "theory cannot escape ideology except to acknowledge its own imbrication with a particular set of values. In one sense, theory and ideology are identical: they both function according to a set of precepts or system of laws, which operate tacitly or overtly" (p. 113).

Soyinka's disavowal of ideology, his functionalist approach to literary criticism, and his skepticism regarding western literary theory and ideology are all reflected in the approach taken by many African critics. It is a stance which does not take into account the crucial fact that, paradoxically, in articulating and operating within a criticism that disavows overt ideology and theory, such African critics are in fact constructing and putting into practice tacit, heuristic versions of ideology and theory.

In *The Ideology of Power and the Power of Ideology*, Goran Therborn (1980) brings up two characteristics of ideology that are pertinent to this discussion and which are not necessarily emphasized in the ways in which any of the critics discussed here have approached the influence of ideology on literary criticism. The first is that ideology should not be seen as a product or as a *fait accompli* but as an ongoing process of interpellation. The second is that ideology is inextricably linked with power. In light of Therborn's first point, involvement in ideologies becomes not merely a matter of unconscious co-optation into one fixed ideology or another (or choosing not to be ideologically involved) but being subject (in the sense of both active participant and co-opted victim) to/of one evolving ideology or another. As far as the second point is concerned, if we move beyond what Therborn describes as some Marxists' reliance "on the crude utilitarian notion of 'interest'" (p. 10), we can begin to understand why Africans have developed an array of approaches to literature, some of which would appear to be in their best interest in terms of establishing a distinct tradition, and others which appear to represent their willing co-optation into more powerful western traditions.

"We are bolakaja critics [and bolakaja means] come down and fight."
(Onwuchekwa Chinweizu and Ihechukwu Madubuike)

I have undertaken to illustrate that African literary criticism (like any criticism) is imbued with theory and ideology because I wish to underscore the fact that none of the branches of African criticism can be regarded as "atheoretical" or "non-ideological." Having made this point, I wish also to stress that Africans (especially latter-day critics) have tended for the most part to subscribe only half-heartedly (and sometimes not at all) to "European" models of criticism. What this has meant is that because of the primacy of function over theory, African criticism has not been subject to as many changes nor have African branches of criticism been as transient and multi-faceted as European models. European theory and criticism has gone from Expressive Realism to New Criticism, from Formalism to Reader-power, from structuralism to poststructuralism with many subbranches and other ideologies intersecting with each. Along the way, European critics have labeled themselves according to one of the models and unabashedly switched labels once converted to another model or once they find another model to be in ascendance. Thus, for example, one might be a structuralist for years and then become a poststructuralist. With the influence of poststructuralism, it is increasingly being recognized that rather than being an individual with a unitary and perhaps evolving approach to literature, one is in fact a subject (in both senses of the word) of a multiplicity of discourses, many of which have a direct or indirect bearing on one's approach to literature. Thus in order to label the contemporary critic, one would have to employ a string of labels such that one would speak, for example, not merely of a poststructuralist critic but of a feminist-Marxist-poststructuralist-deconstructivist critic.

Africans critics on the other hand have, for the most part, proclaimed or more often assumed African criticisms. Also, they have tended not to label themselves according to their branches of criticism (the African-centerdness of such criticisms being a given) but to label the branches they do not subscribe to and which they wish to criticize. This is not to say that there are no African critics who proclaim to be structuralists or feminists, for example, but rather that African critics are much more united in incorporating some sort of African functionalist approach in their criticism. While the multiplicity of discourses which one is subject to are not explicitly recognized through such an approach, the impossibility of representing them is acknowledged and the dangers inherent in the limits of labeling avoided.[10] Thus, African criticism can be thought of as a tree which

has several branches (some grafted on from "other" trees) that share a common root, namely, a concern for Africa(ns). The differences and hence branches of African criticism arise out of differing opinions on how to take up Africanness in criticism, out of differing opinions on whether and how to take up Africa's historical relationship with the outside world (especially the African diaspora and the former colonizers) in literature and literary criticism, as well as in a more general sense, out of differing overt ideologies that influence criticism.

Given this background, the following are some of the identifiable branches of African criticism. The list provided here is by no means exhaustive, but, rather, it is indicative of a range of continental African literary approaches.[11] I provide a brief summary of each of these approaches, first, because they are not widely known outside of Africa and their articulation here will contribute to addressing one aspect of the perennial problem of the marginalization of African knowledge. Second, I point to these African schools of criticism in order to give the reader an indication of the established possibilities open to me and other Africans in negotiating an African approach to literary criticism. Finally, I identify my own stance in relation to this array of theoretical/ideological approaches. The stance I identify myself as taking will of course be necessarily transitionary, since my ultimate aim is to take a position which extends beyond the limitations of the various options, I will articulate as being open to me.

Larsonist Criticism or The Lazy School of Literary Criticism

Both labels were coined by Ayi Kwei Armah (1977, 1985) to refer to the approach of European critics who undertake to appreciate African literature without taking African aesthetics and culture into account. This brand of criticism is characterized by a tendency to simply impose western aesthetics on African works, and to constantly compare African writers to European writers (so that Wole Soyinka is seen as the Bernard Shaw of Nigeria, for example). Armah sees this as both laziness on the part of such critics (hence, "the lazy school of literary criticism"), and, more significantly, as an attempt to "steal" African literature from Africans by incorporating and subsuming it within the western tradition of literature (hence Larsonist). Also, Armah has seized on the fact that, rather fortuitously, one of the principal critics in this school is actually named Larson.

African Eurocentric Criticism

This term has been used by several progressive African critics to refer to the approach of African critics who have been trained in Europe and who (rather like Larsonists) apply largely European aesthetics and criteria to African works. This category embraces many of the early African critics such as Eustace Palmer (who was head of the Department of English at Fourah Bay College when I was an undergraduate there). It is sometimes applied to critics who identify themselves according to western schools (an example would be the structuralist Sunday Anozie). Not surprisingly, this branch has a high profile in the west, but is dismissed as un-African by some contemporary African critics.

Negritude Criticism

Conceived in the 1930s by Aime' Cesaire and Leopold Senghor, Negritude criticism was the earliest consistent and comprehensive theory and criticism of African literature developed by Africans. Negritude was a conscious rejection, through both literature and criticism, of the image of Africa and Africans being perpetrated globally by Europeans during the colonial era. It reclaimed notions such as Blackness, Africa, and so on as potent, positive symbols and attributes. It also operated on a (re)conception of Africa that was not restricted to the continent but rather embraced Africans in the diaspora in a notion of Pan-Africanism based on race and the common yoke of colonialism. (Indeed, two of its founders, Aime' Cesaire and Leon-Gontran Damas, were not continental Africans). The question of whether to speak of Pan-Africanism or exclusively of continental Africanism is an issue that writers, critics, and African theorists have had to contend with ever since. Negritude critics tended to romanticize Africa, and it is in reaction to their constant attempts to declare in effect that Black is beautiful that Soyinka declared that oft quoted censure, "the tiger does not proclaim its tigritude." Developed by Africans living under French colonialism, Negritude made fewer, less effective, and less resilient inroads into literary criticism in "English speaking Africa." Though its contribution to such notions as Pan-Africanism and Afrocentricism has been tremendous, and though it still has some influence in "francophone African" criticism, Negritude has been largely discarded because it has been seen as depending on and merely reacting to the categories and traditions of the colonizers rather than asserting, as it claimed, a uniquely African worldview.

Bolakaja Criticism or Neo-Tarzanist Criticism

Led by critics like Chinweizu, Jemie and Madubuike (who chose the label "bolakaja") this branch vigorously attacks attempts to perpetuate the imposition of western aesthetics and criteria on African literature. This branch agitates for and is in the process of developing a "truly" African criticism based almost exclusively on traditional orature forms. Wole Soyinka has criticized the restrictiveness, exclusivity, and essentialization of African culture and African literature employed in this approach. In his view, culture is syncretic; and a conception of African culture that does not take into account, for example, the fact that modern African culture incorporates elements such as computers, aircraft, and television and that African literature has been influenced by western literature is myopic and portrays African culture as stagnant. Soyinka (1975) has therefore dubbed this school Neo-Tarzanist.

Ogunist Criticism or Pseudo-Traditionalist Criticism

This branch is led by Wole Soyinka. While the origin of the label Ogunism remains obscure, it is highly unlikely that Soyinka coined it. More probably it was coined by detractors as a backhanded acknowledgment of the fact that Soyinka's favorite god is Ogun (the Yoruba god of iron, battle, and creativity). This branch could be said to profess a progressive traditionalism in that its members operate principally from African worldviews but differ from bolakaja critics in that they regard culture as dynamic, in a constant process of change, and open to modernizaton and outside influences. They take the role of writers and critics to be that of social commentators and at times agents of social change. Critics of this branch have labeled it pseudo-traditionalist, Eurocentric formalist, and neo-Negritudionist because they perceive its traditional Africanist stance to be half-hearted, because they feel it is too heavily influenced by Eurocentric notions of culture, literature, and criticism, and because they feel it puts forward a criticism that ends up defending Black and African culture to the outside world rather than simply writing for African audiences and exploring issues that really concern African peoples themselves.

Leftist Criticism or Radical Chicist Criticism

Led by Marxist critics like Biodun Jeyifo, Omafume Onoge, and Ngugi wa Thiong'o, and based on (African) revolutionary aesthetics (e.g., Udenta, 1993), this branch concentrates on a materialist analysis of

African society in literature and actively seeks to bring about social change. Its insistence on materialist analysis to the exclusion of other aspects and its tendency to prescribe what African writers should be writing about and what literature is African and what is not has prompted Soyinka to dub this school a Leftocracy. In addition, its rising popularity (especially in Nigeria) and the fact that its members sometimes glibly impose an uninterrogated Marxist framework on African culture has led Soyinka to refer to this type of criticism as Radical Chicist Criticism.

African Feminist and Womanist Criticism

It is rather disappointing that neither feminist nor womanist criticism are mentioned as categories of African criticism in Gugelberger (1985), or in Ashcroft et al. (1989). This oversight is telling since there are so many African women writers and critics, and there is even a canon of African women's literature in the making (a manifestation of the process of developing a multiplicity of canons to which I have referred).[12] The oversight is particularly glaring in light of the fact that there are prominent African women writers and critics, almost all of whom advocate women's rights and gender equity in African societies, and engage and take a variety of positions on feminism. For some feminism is a western concept, and adopting it would be a form of parroting; for others, it needs to be qualified and adapted to the specificity of African women's concerns (e.g., Black feminism or African feminism); and for others still, alternative African concepts parallel to western feminism need to be developed (e.g., Molara Ogundipe's notion of "stiwanism" and Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi's notion of "womanism"); and then there are those who readily embrace the label feminist and consider any qualifiers merely divisive.[13]

While both African feminists and womanists address gender issues and the treatment of women in the works of male and female authors, feminists concentrate specifically on such issues as sexism and women's oppression and spaces for women's empowerment either within African societies as they currently exist or through social change. Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi, who developed the concept and coined the term "womanist," sees women as "mothers of the people" and describes a womanist as "a woman committed to the survival and wholeness of the entire people, men and women, African and people of its diaspora" (quoted in Haraway, 1988, p. 116). Stiwanism is quite similar since STIWA is an acronym which stands for Social Transformation Including Women in Africa (Davies & Ogundipe-Leslie, 1995). In addition to their own

engagements with feminism, African feminists in particular and women writers and critics who address issues of gender equity in general are open to attacks that they are "un-African." The arguments are, first, that feminism is a western tradition, second, that feminism is a divisive politics which pits African women against African men, and third, that sexism is not as big and prevalent a problem as African women writers make it out to be.[14]

Where I Stand

In situating myself in relation to these branches of African criticism, I do not believe I avoid the issue by stating that no one branch accurately captures my stance. I share a skepticism of European schools of criticism with other African critics, yet I do not deny but in fact actively utilize the influence of my largely "European/western/Eurocentric" education (both in Sierra Leone and in Canada) on my criticism. I regard cultural and sociopolitical criticism and social vision as crucial, and yet I share many of Soyinka's reservations about a narrow Marxist materialist analysis of African societies. Articulating a progressive African framework involves going against the grain of received western conceptions as well as some established African (re)conceptions of literature. At times, therefore, it is necessary to be confrontational, to invite someone or other to "come down and fight." However, even if I consider Udenta's (1993) assertion that bolakaja criticism comes with what amounts to a "tinge of racial bigotry" (p. xii) rather harsh, I do agree with Kwame Anthony Appiah's (1990) criticism that it is ironically a critique of (western) universalism which "is itself covertly universalist" (p. 71). Gender issues are important to me and I am pro-feminist, yet such issues are only part of what I feel needs to be addressed in a comprehensive framework of African literature. I strongly believe, however, that a progressive African framework for literature studies must incorporate African feminism as a vital, integral approach, one to be embraced and undertaken not only by female critics but also by male critics. Taking all these factors into consideration, I can only describe myself (to consciously fall into the European trap of self-labeling) as an Ogunist critic who draws considerably on radical left and feminist criticisms.

It is also significant to note that while most of these branches of African criticism are characterized principally, if not exclusively, by their notions of how to undertake criticism of African literature, I am pointing to the development of a framework and a critical African outlook that

could be utilized to inform one's reading of any literature. In short, though I am concerned with the criticism of African literature, the framework I feel needs to be developed would also deal with the application of African literary criticism to literatures from other parts of the world. It is important to point out that this does not necessarily imply the wholesale and exclusive imposition of African criticism on all literatures in an Afrocentric reversal of Eurocentric criticism. Rather, what I am advocating is the identification of issues that would be of interest to Africans, and an examination of how such issues might be taken up differently given Africans' concerns and worldviews.[15] I will also attempt to further explicate the underlying theories and ideologies in African criticism in general and my own criticism in particular.

"Speaking of African literature is meaningless." (Sada Niang)

Pointing to the fact that there is no one unified African language used by African writers, and the fact that continental Africa embraces such a large number of ethnic societies, each with a unique culture, Sada Niang (1991) has declared not only that the term "African literature" is hegemonic, but further that speaking of African literature is meaningless.[16] Niang prefers to speak of national literatures. He acknowledges, however, that even the notion of national literatures is problematic in the African context since, culturally, African nations function not as units but as federations of ethnic groups.

Niang's comments are particularly interesting in that he has not taken the concept of African literature as a given and gone on to raise the usual question of what should be included and what excluded from it. Rather, he has challenged the very notion of "African literature." Thus his stance is the literary parallel of those who have argued that there is and can be no such thing as "African culture."

Niang's position is only one of several divergent positions that African critics have taken on the issue of defining what constitutes African literature. Kwame Anthony Appiah (1992) has written on what he describes as "the myth of an African world" (p. 70). His point is not that there are no discernible ties that bind Africans nor that the comprehensive concepts of African culture or African literature are untenable, but rather that they are not to be taken as given, as metaphysically inherent, as unproblematic presuppositions. African identity and African literature, he insists, are being actively constructed, not "always already" in existence. Ngugi (1986) has sometimes used language as the criterion of definition, identi-

fying all literature written in African languages as African literature and raising serious doubts about whether we ought to consider literature written in European languages (more specifically, English, French, and Portuguese, the languages some Africans acquired through colonial and later neo-colonial education) as African literature.[17] What Ngugi does not take into account in articulating this position is the fact that there is no hermetic relationship between language and racial or geographic identity. It is less likely but still possible for non-Africans to acquire African languages, and this raises the question of whether a text written in Yoruba by a white English writer or a text written in Kiswahili by a white Belgian could properly be called an African text. Irele (1990) acknowledges that the entire business of drawing boundaries around African literature or even coming up with hard and fast standards for what constitutes African literature is complex and messy, and he opts to shelve the entire issue as "a false problem" (p. 11) in favor of going on with the business of saying how "the material we have at hand" (p. 11) as African literature should be approached. While acknowledging the complexity and messiness of any attempt to define and draw boundaries around African literature, I want to attempt in some tentative manner to begin to articulate some of the criteria I would recommend utilizing in determining what should be included in the categories "African literature" and "African literature studies."

"Africa does not end where salt water licks the shores of the continent." (Molefi Asante)

In attempting to articulate a utilitarian African literature studies, I believe it is best to operate within a Pan-Africanist conception of Africa, that is, one which embraces both the African continent and the African diaspora. This is because I firmly believe in the politics of a Pan-African identity or identification as it has been variously articulated in discourses which emphasize the similarities and continuities, between continental and diasporic Africans (e.g., Garveyism and Afrocentrism) and those which examine pastiche, hybrid Africanness (e.g., Black Atlantic identification). However, it is also useful to situate one's articulation according to the geographical and cultural regions with which one is most intimately familiar. Thus, my arguments are restricted to a conceptualization of how utilitarian African criticism would operate in the context of the African continent. From this expansive but manageable initial articulation it is possible to illustrate the implications of some of the elements for Africans in the diaspora.

This is not to be taken to mean that I subscribe to a rigid dichotomy between the continent and the African diaspora, nor, worse yet, that I am endorsing a hierarchization of Africanness which places continental Africans at the apex and relegates diasporic Africans to a less "authentic" base. I have several reasons for concentrating on continental Africa. First, the scope of the project must be of a manageable size and even continental Africa provides what is perhaps an already too expansive scope. Second, I am most familiar with the cultures, literature, and criticism of continental Africa (more specifically Sierra Leone and other "English" West African countries), and I consequently have more to say about such regions than about the diaspora. Third, articulating a utilitarian African literature studies entails undertaking a delicate balancing act between a politics and process of comprehensiveness, unity, and *recueillement* (which one could describe as being based on Afrocentricism) on the one hand and a politics and process of particularity, difference, and deconstruction (which draws loosely on postmodernism and poststructuralism) on the other.

"Are we dealing here with the issue of race and thought or with the issue of culture and thought?" (Simeon Chilungu)

In the discussion following Patrick Taylor's (1989) paper on four Pan-Africanists' work on development, Simeon Chilungu and others criticize Taylor for using the words "Black" and "African" interchangeably. According to one discussant, "Black" is racist; it denotes what you look like rather than who you are. According to another, "Black" is negative; it connotes evil and unpleasantness and must not be used by Africans to identify themselves. I believe that Taylor was quite justified in using "Black" and "African" interchangeably. The vast majority of the people I have in mind when I speak of Africans are in fact Black people. My notion of African is based both on race and on culture (as well as on a shared history, worldview, and self-identification as African). In response to Chilungu's question, then, my answer would be that we are speaking of both race and culture (and even this combination is only part of the picture) when we speak of African thought. To refuse to use race as a criterion or to identify Black as synonymous with evil and all things negative is to accept white, western, racist definitions and connotations. I (re)claim Black as positive, unifying, and enabling, just as Negritudionists did as long ago as the 1930s.

The refusal of some Black academics to bring up and deal with race (let alone speak as Blacks) is a phenomenon that bell hooks (1988a) has described as "extremely tragic" (p. 65). Soyinka (1990) has shown that several African peoples, acting not out of racism but as a means of self-identification, have always used words which mean "Black peoples" to reference themselves, their descendants and those with whom they feel they have affinity.[18] Even Henry Louis Gates (1986), who has written a piece illustrating that race is nothing more than a construct, has admitted elsewhere (Gates, 1990a) that knowing that race is a construct is not much help when one is faced with actual incidents of racism.

Soyinka's arguments illustrate that to identify oneself as Black and to speak of race is natural for some peoples and is not necessarily racist. bell hooks (1988a) makes a strong argument in favor of Black academics incorporating their Blackness in their work as a means of introducing different voices and thereby contributing to breaking the monopoly of the white male voice, knowledge, and ways of knowing in academia. Henry Louis Gates illustrates that despite the fact that race is a construct, people (African Americans in particular in his example) have to deal with its negative ramification, namely racism. Put together, the arguments of these three prominent Black academics constitute a strong argument for Black people to acknowledge Blackness as part of their identity, and incorporate it in their politics and work. I have no hesitation, therefore, in pointing to Blackness as one of the criteria that I would use to identify Africans.

Further, I subscribe to a notion of African that embraces all Black peoples who choose to identify themselves as African, wherever they may be. Examples abound of Blacks outside the continent identifying themselves as Africans. Such diasporic self-identification ranges from the philosophy of Afrocentrism as espoused by Molefi Asante (1987, 1988) to the dub poetry of African Canadians like Ahdri Zhina Mandiela (1991). Arguably, it is in the lyrics of diasporic Africans that we find the most widespread and adamant self-identification. The Jamaican Rastafarian, Peter Tosh (1976) declared in *African* that, "no matter where you come from, as long as you're a Black man [or woman], you're an African." The American rap group Arrested Development (1994) declare "Africa's inside me" while another American rap artist, Queen Latifah (1991), has proudly taken up what was intended to be the derogatory title of "Mama Zulu," and the English reggae group Aswad (1989) assert that Black youths living in Peckham and Brixton are in fact "African children."

Having said all this, I must stress that I am only pointing here to those characteristics which to me (and only from a personal standpoint) appear

to delimit Africanness. My criteria are in no way meant to be definitive. In fact, I would emphasize that being African is largely a state of mind; it is an identity to be claimed rather than assigned; it is, as Achebe (1975) puts it, "a view of the world and of the whole cosmos perceived from a particular position" (p. 63). Soyinka's (1990) discussion of how certain peoples in continental Africa (e.g., groups in Somalia, Ethiopia, and the Sudan) have vacillated over whether they should be considered Arabs or Africans illustrates that in some cases neither geography nor skin color nor a combination of the two are enough to designate Africanness, especially where the peoples involved are not in agreement about what their identity is, where they are ambivalent about their identity or where they choose to vacillate about their identity for strategic reasons. I freely acknowledge that there are problematic grey areas when I speak of "Africans" and African literature. Apart from the Arab/African confluence, one also has to contend with Indians in Kenya, Lebanese in Sierra Leone, and Whites in South Africa. Are such people to be considered African, and if they write literature, is it to be considered African literature? My tentative solution to this complex problem is to invoke on the one hand the concept of African identity as a state of mind, and on the other the notion of criteria for critical African aesthetics to decide (on an individual basis) whether to include such writers and their works in my conception of African literature. In other words, such people would have to see and identify themselves as Africans in order for them to be considered Africans.[19] Using these criteria, I would have no hesitation in excluding Joseph Conrad and his *Heart of Darkness* (even though he wrote about Africa, Conrad remained an Englishman despite all temptations, as Achebe, 1975, puts it) from the category African literature. Equally, I have no hesitation in including the white South African, Athol Fugard, and his *Sizwe Bansi Is Dead* in the category "African literature" because Fugard not only writes about Africa, he has an African perspective (e.g., he identifies with and situates the struggles of Blacks at the center of his work rather than using them merely as a backdrop.)

"Can I be taught to read as an African?" (Helen Harper)

All the arguments that have been put forward thus far constitute a case for the possibility of constructing an overtly politicized, utilitarian African literature studies. Such a framework would be characterized by flexibility in the matter of literary ideology. It would break with the western fixation on rigid adherence to particular and ever shifting ideologies as the guid-

ing principle in interpretation, replacing this with a more pragmatic focus on the sociopolitical issues to be addressed. Allowing the issues raised within the text to help determine the ideological approach to be taken makes for greater ideological flexibility. It must be noted, however, that this focus on politics entails rejecting the more problematic approaches to criticism which merely appropriate African works for Eurocentric versions of criticism.

As far as the issue of canons is concerned, it will be necessary for Africans to develop African canons. These will ensure Africans have some control over which African works are considered valuable and which are not. The elitism and exclusivity which have characterized western canons need not be repeated in the case of African canons, and Africans will in fact be faced with the challenge of developing new, more egalitarian, and more African-centered criteria for judging literary works. In the new framework, the notion of art-for-art's-sake should be firmly rejected in favor of a more pragmatic aesthetics, one concerned with resistance and the articulation, celebration, and interrogation of changing African values, cultures, and norms. The practice of attempting to pigeonhole African works into Eurocentric literary history and genre classifications should be discontinued and more appropriate African versions of literary history and genres of literature developed. Because African writers are concerned not so much with literature as an end in itself but as a vehicle for sociopolitical commentary, literature studies in Africa should no longer be concerned with the falsely constructed hermetic cosmos of the individual text but with the text as a tool for analyzing concrete, sociopolitical issues.

As Irele (1990) has asserted, the difficulty of narrowly defining who is and who is not African and, hence, what is and what is not African literature need not proscribe the interpretation of what we already have before us as African literature. The focus on African issues and the clearing of a space to begin to address other issues related to literary studies in Africa than interpreting African works should mean more critics will devote themselves to addressing the problem of identifying and demarcating African literature. In the end a consensus will be reached or a number of positions arrived at and widely subscribed to by different critics.

It bears reiterating that an African framework for literature studies should be considered part of a comprehensive African project of possibility. It is meant to be a means of utilizing literature studies in a more comprehensive project (in which many Africans are engaged) of evolving decolonized, just, democratic, compassionate African societies. It brings a predominantly African perspective to literature studies. It is meant to be

taught to and learned by Africans. It is meant to address the issues, problems, and concerns of African peoples. It is meant to reflect the culture and worldviews of Africans. In short, it puts Africa at the center and as such is intended to be truly Afrocentric. Its emphasis is on continental Africa(ns) but a wider notion of Africa(n) is kept in mind, and as the sources I have drawn upon here indicate, I shall not only be pointing to how it can be made applicable to Africans in the diaspora but also drawing on diasporic critics and cultures to inform its formulation.

All of this is not to suggest, however, that critical African literature studies is to be the exclusive domain of Africans. My project is an exercise like many others that have to do with Africans rejecting global marginalizaton and claiming the center (or *a* center) for themselves. It therefore should be developed by Africans. However, I also believe that once developed, it should become part of the international body of knowledge, accessible to all. I do not take this stance easily or comfortably. I know how controversial such a stance is, especially in exclusivist Afrocentric circles. I am also acutely aware of the too often justified mistrust of people at the "center" that makes Africans take an exclusivist stance.[20] I also believe, however, that, as Chris Weedon (1987) asserts, one has to get one's discourse in circulation for it to have an impact. And I want critical African literature studies to have an impact beyond Africa. I want it to engage and contribute to the disruption of the global hegemony of Eurocentric knowledge and ways of knowing. More specifically, I want it to be one of what I hope will be a number of approaches to literature studies. Finally, I believe that to take an exclusivist stance would be to actively participate in the ghettoization of my work and to fail to address the global hegemony of Eurocentrism by failing to put my work "out there."

To recapitulate then, I would eventually like to see aspects or the whole of critical African literary criticism taken up by non-Africans. This brings me to the question of whether non-Africans can actually take an African perspective and fully access and utilize an Afrocentric framework of literature studies. As a white colleague put it, "Can I be taught to read as an African?" It seems to me that for the longest time Africans have had to (and still have to) read *like* (if not *as*) Europeans, and we have not done so badly. I see no reason why the reverse cannot be true nor why the prospect should be considered particularly daunting or momentous. Perhaps it is in the complex situation in which white students in Calgary looking out on a winter scene use an Afrocentric framework to try to make sense of a depiction of a harmattan scene in Kano, while Black students in Kano on a hot, dry, windy harmattan day use a Eurocentric framework to try to make sense of

a depiction of a winter scene in Calgary that we will come closer to understanding each other and the contradictions of alienation and passionate fascination, joy and frustration, love and hate evoked in us by this discourse that we so glibly refer to as "literature."

"And it is still literature you're talking about, right?" (Rowland Wright)

The above are arguments I have been ruminating on for a considerable length of time. When I went back to Sierra Leone for a visit in 1992, I explained some of them to my brother (whose first degree was a joint English/Philosophy honors degree). He found all of it interesting but in the end asked me what all these changes meant. "With all these changes, you are still talking about literature, right?" he asked as if looking and hoping for reassurance that I had not stepped beyond the bounds of what is considered the discipline of literature. I remember becoming quite defensive at the time, insisting that he was too tightly wedded to and constrained by Eurocentric notions of what constituted literary practice. My defensiveness was in fact partly due to the fact that I had started to wonder myself about the very issue he was raising. My initial reaction to this ambivalence was to insist to him (and silently to myself) that any and every aspect of literary convention ought to be open to radical change in the name of the project I was undertaking and any ambivalence to this process was entirely due to narrow adherence to conventional, Eurocentric, and hegemonic literary traditions.

However, my ambivalence stayed with me and in fact became more pressing, and for a number of months I was actually immobilized in terms of progress on my dissertation. I thought about the changes I was proposing to make and was forced to ask myself if, indeed, when the changes I proposed were implemented, what I would end up with could still be recognizable as literary practice. Overtly politicized literature was not being rejected completely in the west, but it did hold at best a marginal status, with aesthetics-driven literary practice still holding hegemonic sway. Perhaps an African version of this (which was being advocated by a number of African writers and critics well before the western push by critics like Eagleton and Wald) would only lead to a version of criticism that would result from its relegation to being a marginal and dubious form of literary practice. Compounding the issue of politics in literature was my view that the literary practice I envisioned would have to actually be utilitarian. It would not be enough to acknowledge that literature was politi-

cal: literary practice and literature studies would have to begin to utilize literature as a tool to analyze concrete historical and contemporary sociopolitical and cultural issues. Thus the insularity and emphasis on meaning-making which to a great extent define literature would be eschewed in favor of much wider and more overtly political concerns. Notions of what is beautiful in a work would have to change, and further, even the premium placed on aesthetics as the definitive characteristic and determinant of what constitutes great literature would be displaced in favor of new criteria. Orature and performance forms which traditionally are not even considered genres of literature would not only have to be included but would displace traditional mainstays of written poetry and prose as the principal "literary" genres.

If all of these changes were implemented, was I still talking about literature? Surely I was talking at the very minimum about literature (i.e., literature under erasure). Perhaps I was not talking about literature at all; perhaps I was stepping so far outside the bounds of what is acceptable and viable in terms of radical change that I was in fact invested in or was straying into a new, as yet undefined, discourse.

As I continued to focus on what I began to detest as the unfairly restrictive nature of literature studies, I began to think of the possibilities opened up by another field I was involved in, namely the "anti-discipline" of cultural studies. I began to wonder if there was any connection to be made between the changes I was trying to articulate and cultural studies. I then remembered that I in fact had a book by Antony Easthope (1991) on my shelves (a book I had bought but never actually read) that was titled *Literary Into Cultural Studies*. The very title strongly suggested liberation from my impasse and pointed to the direction my dissertation ought to take. What I needed to articulate, and indeed I and many other African critics before me had begun to articulate, could be considered an African version of the transition from literary to cultural studies. However, as the next chapter will reveal, while affording more creative space and providing a more receptive discourse for my radically reconceptualized project, cultural studies was not necessarily a panacea. Immersing myself more seriously in the material and discourse of cultural studies quickly brought me to the realization that the very problems of Eurocentrism I had sought to address in literary criticism characterized and would have to be addressed in the transition from literary to cultural studies. The next chapter deals with my articulation of a transition from literary studies in Africa to what I am now conceptualizing as African cultural studies. I want to avoid the pitfall of conceptualizing and articulating African cultural

studies merely as an application of the already existing (Eurocentric) discourses and models of cultural studies. To fall into this trap would be to reproduce a cultural studies version of Larsonist criticism or African Eurocentric criticism. Conversely, I do not wish to conceptualize and articulate African cultural studies as merely a counter-discourse to Eurocentric cultural studies: Africans have concerns other than being foils and voices of insurgence in the discourses of others. Ideally I hope to articulate a transition from African literary criticism to African cultural studies that situates the emerging discourse within the global discourses and development of cultural studies, to talk about African cultural studies as a discourse that is at once part of a new, vibrant discourse and at the same time a distinct genre within that new discourse. I conceptualize African cultural studies not as a discourse I am articulating from the start but one which already exists in some ways in heuristic form, such that part of the project is not merely its articulation but also its unearthing.

Chapter Two

Always Already African Cultural Studies? (Re)Examining Historical and Contemporary Issues in Cultural Studies

"Recuperation is always possible." (Antony Easthope)

In 1994, when I was a doctoral candidate at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, a call for papers for a conference on "English: Pedagogy and Politics, Theory and Praxis" turned up at my institution. For some reason, most professors and students did not pay much attention to it and while I toyed with the idea of submitting a presentation proposal, I felt as someone who had made a transition from literature studies to cultural studies that little would interest me, and I would in turn have little to offer at an English conference. At another conference (the first Canadian Cultural Studies Conference, held at the University of Toronto), I happened to be on the same panel as the organizer of the English conference and she encouraged me to submit a proposal. I made it clear to her that I would only do so if I was allowed to present on cultural studies rather than English studies. She assured me that papers on cultural studies would be welcome. However, I still could not muster much enthusiasm for the conference and everyone else I spoke to at OISE claimed they had thought about it but decided not to participate. After the conference organizer contacted me on two more occasions via e-mail, and explained that participants would have their transportation and accommodation covered, I finally put together a proposal and sent it off.

My proposal was to present a paper on a cultural studies examination of African identity in a variety of creative forms. I intended the paper to be a strategic cultural studies intervention in what I presumed (despite the rhetoric of stirring up controversy in the field of English studies that was included in the call for papers) would be an inevitably staid English studies space. Even though I have made a transition from literary studies to cultural studies, I am still very much aware of literature's immense power and continued dominance and am therefore reluctant to take on English head-on or to presume to have succeeded

completely in moving beyond its expansive reach. In fact, to be candid, I am still amazed at how precarious the discourse of cultural studies is and how much the old discourse still intervenes in and threatens to recolonize my own work. I am, as Antony Easthope (1991) puts it, still "haunted by the ghost of the canon and Great Literature as it was taught...years ago" (p. 54). Acutely aware of the fragility of the new discourse I was attempting to operate within, and especially of how vulnerable work in the new discourse would be when articulated within a space in which the old discourse held expansive, self-assured hegemonic sway, I devised my presentation as something of a guerrilla exercise. I decided I would directly address the issue of how Africans on the continent and those in the diaspora appropriate one another's cultural production to construct their historical and contemporary identities. In other words I would present on a topic that involved undertaking a cultural studies project without addressing such thorny issues as the ambivalence I felt about English studies and the need for and viability of a transition from English studies to cultural studies.

This was to be a broad, multi-form, interdisciplinary, project-driven exercise in which, utilizing a cultural studies approach, I was going to explore the (in)appropriateness of appropriations in the construction of African identity as manifest in such diverse areas as the concept of Africa in Rastafarian reggae songs and the dub poetry/drama of Ahdrey Zhina Mandiela (1991); the continental Yoruba roots of Henry Louis Gates's (1988) theory that African American literary aesthetics is based on the "Black Art of Signifyin'"; the utilization by the military regime in Sierra Leone of aspects of Rastafarian culture in attempting to identify with the youth and distance themselves from the previous order of older, corrupt politicians; the representation of continental Africans in Paul Gilroy's (1993) notion of "the Black Atlantic"; and African Canadians' response to the Royal Ontario Museum's "Gold of Meroe" exhibit. My intention was to cover the topic in broad strokes, relying on the multiplicity of forms to lend complexity to the picture. I would therefore deal with literature only in passing and only inasmuch as it was an aspect of my comprehensive topic of examining the construction of African identity. In short I wanted to undertake a cultural studies project in the English space without having to account for myself and without directly confronting English studies. My intention was to take up space for cultural studies, not by fighting over it, but by a guerrilla operation that would involve taking a few pot shots at, but mostly circumventing, English. In terms of the larger project represented in this book, I saw this exercise as

an expansion on one element of African cultural studies, namely the construction of African identity.

Of course the guards, that is, those pesky conference proposal readers, were wide awake and were going to have none of my circumvention. They accepted my proposal on condition that I address issues of pedagogy and focus the paper more explicitly instead of trying to deal with so many different forms. I got the message: I was not going to be allowed to simply undertake cultural studies, nor to deal with a juxtaposition of popular and literary texts, nor to outline a project in which literature became incidental without addressing (and justifying for my project) the transition from literary to cultural studies. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's (1990) exhortation to "seize the centre" notwithstanding, cultural studies was not going to be allowed to occupy the center without an explanation of how and why it got there.

I was left to decide whether to insist on my original agenda, amend my paper to make it more acceptable to the reviewers, or simply not participate in the conference. In the end I decided to change the paper and talk about transitions from literary studies to cultural studies or to what cultural studies theorists like Antony Easthope (1991) choose to call "*signifying practices*," (p. 5) and to try to point to some of the theoretical, political, and pedagogical issues involved in addressing the topic/project I had originally outlined in a classroom situation. I changed the title of my paper from "Is This an African I See Before Me: (In)Appropriate Appropriations and the Construction of African Identity" to a more mundane and direct "In Defence of Transitions From Literary to Cultural Studies." My intention in this paper was not to put forward cultural studies as a panacea for all that ails literature studies, nor to put forward Black/African studies as a solution for all that ails cultural studies, but rather to put forward cultural studies as a preferable though still problematic alternative to literature studies.

The presentations at the conference caused me to reflect on a basic question around the crisis of English. (Robert Morgan [1993] insists that recent developments have caused not merely a crisis *in* English studies but a crisis *of* English studies). The question which arose repeatedly for me at the conference was "when is a work English and when does it fall outside of the discipline?" It appeared to me that some of the papers presented at the conference could or perhaps should more accurately be considered exercises in cultural studies rather than English. The problem of demarcating the discipline of English and the anti-discipline of cultural studies became more acute for me as the conference proceeded. This is an espe-

cially difficult issue not only in terms of the expansiveness of English studies but also in light of the blurriness of the borders of cultural studies. Few cultural studies workers and theorists are willing to engage in drawing and policing boundaries around what has consistently been described as the anti-discipline of cultural studies.[1]

My paper was received as a radical intervention in English studies (which it was partly intended to be), and several people were interested in talking to me about what the change actually meant for "the way English was taught." What was being discussed then was not Easthope's passionate exhortation of "English *into* cultural studies" but rather what was involved in a cultural studies approach to English studies. The distinction is important since the former involves a paradigm shift and possibly the eventual demise of English studies and the latter a much less radical change in the way texts are approached in the English classroom. Invested and immersed as they were in English studies, the participants seemed somewhat reluctant to recognize that I had attempted to present cultural studies not merely as an *aspect of* nor as an approach to English studies but more radically as an *alternative to* English studies. Perhaps the misreading was due to my failure to present my position in a sustained and clear enough fashion. In any case, I was put in the position of repeatedly having to reiterate and underscore the proposal of cultural studies as an alternative to English studies at various points during the conference.

Perhaps rather fittingly, the final session of the conference was punctuated by an incident which appeared to be quite innocuous for most of the participants but which was quite significant for me as someone attuned to issues pertaining to the transition from literary to cultural studies. A question was asked about how and when a distinction could be made between cultural studies and English studies (the person who posed the question referred to specific papers which addressed issues and employed methods that appeared to fall outside the purview of English studies and to my presentation in particular in which I had articulated cultural studies as an alternative to English studies). The presenter, a prominent figure in English studies in Canada, declared nonchalantly, "I have no problem calling all of that English." I do not believe this was a calculated dismissal of cultural studies, rather (and this is quite ironic), it was meant to be an illustration of the expansiveness, tolerance, and flexibility of English studies. Easthope's passionate exhortation of English *into* cultural studies pales in the light of the nonchalance of this taken-for-granted appropriation of cultural studies *into* English studies. The threat to English studies that cultural studies was being seen to represent by the

questioner was in no way recognized by the respondent. Equally interesting was the fact that this issue was not followed up by anyone else in the room as other participants appeared quite satisfied with the presenter's response. The ease with which the cultural studies threat was diffused, and an appropriation of cultural studies into English studies declared in this short exchange and accepted through the other participants' ready acceptance of the reiteration of the hegemonic sway of English, served to remind me of the precarious place of cultural studies in the academy and the timeliness and seriousness of Easthope's warning about recuperation. In other words this exchange illustrates that the attempts being made to establish cultural studies as a (distinct?) discipline (or more accurately, anti-discipline) can be curtailed and cultural studies recuperated as merely one of many approaches in the discourse of English studies.

Issues in (African) Cultural Studies

The preceding account reveals, among other things, the precariousness of the relatively new discipline of cultural studies, especially in relation to the well-established and dominant discipline of English studies. While this issue is of interest to me in this chapter, it is not my primary concern. My overarching concern is to put forward African cultural studies (not in isolation but in the context of, or better yet, in relation to, hegemonic, Eurocentric cultural studies). Putting forward African cultural studies entails revisiting several aspects of the development of the anti-discipline of cultural studies in general. I therefore put forward a revisionist historiography of cultural studies (one which challenges the myth of the Birmingham Centre as the singular origin of the discourse) and raise the question of whether, in light of the characteristics of cultural studies being put forward in the west, certain African cultural works do not always already constitute a heuristic form of cultural studies. I am interested in having African cultural studies constitute an insurgent voice in the global development of cultural studies as an anti-discipline (which ironically is drifting toward becoming a discipline: ossified, rigidified, its borders clearly marked and policed, its place in the academy acknowledged and secure while it theorizes about or at the most merely studies life outside the academy). I am also interested in addressing some of the issues facing cultural studies in general, and I therefore add African voices to the case(s) being made for and accounts of heuristic transitions from literary studies to cultural studies. In the same vein I address the issue of how literary texts are to be taken up in the cultural studies classroom. However, I do

not intend to articulate African cultural studies merely as an intervention in the existing discourses of cultural studies; I also intend to portray it as constituting a new development, one which can be associated with western cultural studies but which need not be (as is the case with South Asian subaltern studies). In short, the chapter attempts to put forward African cultural studies, discuss issues facing cultural studies (taking into account an erstwhile unacknowledged African cultural studies), and draw some conclusions about the development of cultural studies in general and the place of African cultural studies in that global development.

Now It Can Be Told: The True Origin of Cultural Studies

When the Mau Mau uprising was in full swing during the colonial era in Kenya, the British government took to demolishing villages and displacing villagers as part of its cultural intimidation tactics aimed in part at cutting off the support structure of the fighters in the bush. The colonial authorities hastily established so-called emergency villages with few or no amenities to house the villagers they had displaced. Kamiriithu was one of these rural slum villages and while it supposedly was initially set up as a temporary settlement, it became permanent with little change in circumstances in 1957. It was and remained after independence in 1963, in Ross Kidd's (1985) terms, a "dormitory village" with very few amenities indeed, a site from which peasants traveled to work in more established towns or agricultural centers. Kamiriithu was characterized by high illiteracy rates, lack of economic opportunity, and a non-existent historical local cultural base. The Kamiriithu Community Education and Cultural Centre was established after independence, initially as a meeting place for youths. With little support from the Kenyan government and with the refusal of the people to accept help from outside entrepreneurs, the Centre became a cultural center of self-reliance that attempted to address the many problems of the villagers as well as provide a place for cultural and theatrical production.

It is a little known fact that cultural studies proper actually originated in 1977 in this little known, "temporary" village in Africa; that the first cultural studies center was the Kamiriithu Community Education and Cultural Centre near the village of Limuru, Kenya.[2] The initial constructors of cultural studies were Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Ngugi wa Mirii, and the members of the Centre. The central project around which it became manifest was a collective theatrical production involving the writing of a play, *Ngaahika Ndeenda* (*I Will Marry When I Want*), building a theater,

rehearsing and actually staging the play. This early cultural studies project was so controversial and radical in the eyes of the Kenyan government that its activities were stopped twice; once in 1977 when the performance of its first play, a community drama production, was banned and Ngugi wa Thiong'o imprisoned, and later in 1982 when its second play was stopped, the Centre's license revoked, and its two-thousand-seat theater demolished.

Of course there were other beginnings of cultural studies in other places: culturulogy in Russia in the 1920s, the Harlem Renaissance in the United States in the 1920s and 1930s, the Negritude Movement in France, francophone Africa, and the French West Indies in the 1930s, and the foundation of Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in Birmingham, England, in the 1960s. However, all of these were at best rather unsatisfactory precursors of the praxis of cultural studies developed at Kamiriithu.

It is unfortunate that the presumption that cultural studies started at the Birmingham Centre has been bandied about so much that it is widely taken as a truism. Even the most cursory comparison of the Birmingham Centre and the Kamiriithu Centre reveals that it is only with the work of the latter that full-fledged cultural studies can be said to have originated. Even though with the introduction of a cultural Marxist approach, the Birmingham Centre proved an improvement on the Frankfurt School's approach to studying culture, for example, it was still plagued by many gaps and problematic aspects. For one thing, there was a serious problem around gender representation—the Birmingham Centre was dominated by men (Richard Hoggart, Tim Moore, Alan Shuttleworth), who drew on the writings of other men (E. P. Thompson, Raymond Williams, George Orwell). In contrast, the cultural studies at Kamiriithu was constructed on a more populist basis, with input from the general membership, at least two thirds of which were female.

Second, while both centers were concerned with the study of culture, the Birmingham Centre fell short of Manthia Diawara's definition which insists that "study" in cultural studies principally involves what he refers to as "performative acts" (i.e., the conjuncture of political activism, and intellectual and creative work.)[3] For example, the earliest productions of the Birmingham Centre were academic occasional papers such as Tim Moore's (1968) *Levi-Strauss and the Cultural Sciences* and Richard Hoggart's (1969) *Contemporary Cultural Studies: An Approach to the Study of Literature and Society*. In other words, the Centre engaged in acts of commentary on and reconceptions of culture rather than performative acts. In

contrast, while one of the leaders of the Kamiriithu Centre was Ngugi wa Thiong'o, one of Africa's most prominent literary critics, the main activity of the Kamiriithu Centre was performative—the building of a theatre, the writing and production of a play, and the exploration of local and national sociocultural issues through that play.

Third, there was something of a contradiction between the Birmingham Centre's emphasis on taking up popular culture seriously and its location of in a university, a location that epitomizes elitism and the reification of knowledge. This situation left open the possibility that popular culture would in fact be examined under the academic gaze and appropriated for merely academic ends rather than taken up in an involved, participatory manner. The Kamiriithu Centre on the other hand avoided this pitfall by locating itself among the general population (as advocated by African Marxist cultural activists such as Amilcar Cabral) and by actively involving peasants in the (re)production and critical examination of local politics and culture.

Fourth, while the Birmingham Centre advocated blurring the distinction between high and low culture, the Kamiriithu Centre made that blurring manifest through popular, participatory theatre. What is clear from all this is that while the Birmingham Centre made significant contributions to the evolution of what we now know as cultural studies, it was only with the Kamiriithu Centre that full-fledged cultural studies emerged. The hegemony of Eurocentric knowledge, combined with the Kenyan government's suppression of the work done at Kamiriithu, has resulted in the false but widely disseminated story that cultural studies started in England with the Birmingham Centre. Now that the presumption of the centrality of EuroAmerica is actively being challenged by polycentric, postcolonial reconceptions of the world,[4] now that the Kenyan government believes that Kamiriithu has been neutralized with Ngugi's exile and the forced disbanding of the Centre, the truth can be told.

Surely the Idea That the Birmingham Centre Could Be Hegemonic Is a Joke?

John Hartley (1992) has described cultural studies as "hedged," because in its academic form it is for the most part a marginalized discourse, conducted by marginalized faculty in marginalized institutions, surrounded and hemmed in by expansive and powerful traditional disciplines, faculty, and institutions. While Hartley's description suggests a passive marginality (due to cultural studies' newness and its inscrutability to popular cul-

ture and the traditional disciplines), it is equally true that cultural studies is also actively marginalized in the academy principally because, despite its manifest marginality, it is still perceived in some quarters as posing a danger to the autonomy, if not the very survival, of the individual traditional academic disciplines it draws on to sustain itself.[5]

One graduate of Birmingham's Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, Paul Gilroy (1992), has characterized work done at the Centre as an imaginary moment, one which ought not to be fetishized. Taking his admonition seriously, I do not wish to suggest that Birmingham represents a singular, linear discourse, nor that it set out to be hegemonic in its construction of the nature and direction of cultural studies. As Cary Nelson, Paula Treichler, and Lawrence Grossberg (1992) point out, the Centre's work was characterized in part by "uncertainties, false starts, interruptions and detours, successes and failures, conflicts" (p. 9). Also, figures like Stuart Hall (1992) who once headed the Centre, and Maureen McNeil (1994), who once taught at the Centre, have pointed out that even at present, the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies is literally a few rooms at the end of a corridor in one of the buildings at Birmingham University; and both conjure images of a skeleton faculty looking out from their poorly staffed, underfunded, and marginalized quarters to North American universities where despite its continued marginalization, cultural studies is proliferating, reasonably well-funded and is fast acquiring academic legitimacy.[6]

Given this situation, why would anyone who operates within cultural studies and who professes progressive politics want to attack cultural studies and its accepted historical foundations? The answer lies in part in the very success of the Birmingham Centre. There is no denying that Birmingham has achieved spectacular and well-deserved success (in terms of work produced and consequent international reputation) despite all the historical and contemporary odds against it. However, part of the legacy of the "worldliness" (to employ Edward Said's term) of Birmingham is the fact that it has been widely, indeed globally, and for the most part unproblematically accepted as the singular origin of cultural studies. However unwittingly, and in spite of the continued efforts of figures like Gilroy, Hall, and McNeil to resist this designation, Birmingham has taken on mythical proportions and further, is being appropriated in the effort to discipline the anti-discipline of cultural studies. By this I mean to reference the ways in which Birmingham has become part of a singular historicizing of cultural studies; the way it is being employed in limited and limiting accounts that render cultural studies an exclusively academic pur-

suit; the way it is being taken up as the source of a European export and therefore (like everything from the Enlightenment, to postmodernism and poststructuralism, which are also European exports) worthy of serious attention and validation in the North American and Australian academy.

Thus, while Hall (1992) makes an important distinction between the grand narrative of cultural studies and the practice conducted at individual sites, there are ways in which, in the case of Birmingham, the two are often thrown together (albeit unfairly) and treated as inextricably linked in historicizing and describing the status quo of cultural studies. Consequently, early work done at the Centre is seen to define, if not constitute, the grand narrative of early cultural studies, and contemporary work from Birmingham is taken up as at least as important as any other work in determining the future direction if not the construction of the contemporary grand narrative of cultural studies. In my view, then, any effort to introduce Other discourses of cultural studies and to contribute to resistance to the perpetuation of the notion of cultural studies as an exclusively academic pursuit, as a unified discourse with a definitive, singular history, is undertaken in the shadow of Birmingham. Any such project, therefore, contends, or ought to contend with, Birmingham: not with the few rooms and understaffed and marginalized site that constitutes the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies and not with the practice of cultural studies conducted there, but certainly with an already fetishized, mythically proportioned, and indeed hegemonic Birmingham Centre.

Historicizing Cultural Studies as a Simon Meets Foucault Meets Ngugi Kind of Thing

Roger Simon (1992) employs the term "contravision" in *Teaching Against the Grain: Texts for a Pedagogy of Possibility* to describe a vision of the purpose of education that countered and offered an alternative to the dominant, taken-for-granted, one-dimensional view of schooling as a socializing agent that served to maintain the status quo in terms of how individuals are privileged, marginalized, or discriminated against in terms of age, gender, sexual orientation, race, class, and ability. Drawing on and taking some liberties with Simon's (1992) notion of "contravision," I have put forward the preceding alternative version of the origin of cultural studies as a "contra-retrospective." By this I mean to refer to a notion of revisionist historiography which involves historicizing cultural studies from a previously silenced, marginalized or unarticulated perspective. The process of retrospection in this sense, therefore, yields an origin

which is not only contrary to the given, hegemonic origin, but which opens up possibilities for making meaningful, progressive intervention in the international historicizing of cultural studies.

I put forward this contra-retrospective in much the same way that Ngugi (1993) makes a case in *Moving the Centre* for Kiswahili as a common world language; that is, as a tongue-not-so-firmly-in-cheek, leave off the cappuccino and smell the Kenyan coffee, kind of assertion. In the same way that Ngugi consistently points to the Eurocentrism of literature and literary criticism, I intend this intervention to be one way of beginning to expose the exclusivity and Eurocentrism in what critical pedagogues describe as the "taken-for-grantedness"[7] of the accepted history of cultural studies. I am not particularly invested in insisting that Kamiriithu constituted the definitive origin of cultural studies, but I do wish to insist that Kamiriithu is one of many Other origins of cultural studies. Similarly, while I do not sincerely believe that the exact moment of emergence of "full-fledged cultural studies" can be discerned with any certainty, let alone that Kamiriithu constitutes that moment, I am deadly serious about problematizing the ease with which precisely the same claims are made and accepted about Birmingham. My aim is not to declare the Anglocentric version of the history of cultural studies false but rather to remind myself and the reader that it is, as all historical accounts are, a particular, subjective account, one of many plausible accounts and in that sense "fictional" and open to reinterpretation and displacement. Lawrence Grossberg (1989b) in particular has warned of the danger of the rise of relativism in cultural studies, so in anticipation of objections to my producing another version of the origin of cultural studies on the grounds that this contributes to relativism in the discourse, I wish to state that the risk of relativism is more acceptable to me than continuing to operate within the contradiction of an insurgent, enabling, expansive discourse constructed upon a narrow, restrictive, Anglocentric, foundation which does not acknowledge the work of the vast majority of the world's early heuristic cultural theorists and workers. Finally, I intend this to be a means of beginning to challenge the very tenability and usefulness of attempting to pinpoint a singular origin of the disparate, multiple, and nebulous discourses of cultural studies. In a sense, I undertake this Afrocentric contra-retrospective of cultural studies as a Foucauldian reversal.[8] David Shumway's (1989) summation of Foucaultian reversal is especially succinct:

> When tradition gives us a particular interpretation of an event or an historical development, Foucault's strategy is to work out the implications of the reverse or opposite interpretation. The strategy of reversal tells Foucault what to look for

> by pointing to the simple existence of the other side of things....Foucault assumes...that those elements that seem to hold a discourse together, that guarantee its connection to some non-discursive reality, cannot perform these functions without also performing negative ones that limit the discourse or rarefy it. (pp. 15–16)

Michel Foucault's strategy of reversal has considerable implications in terms of the discourse of cultural studies. In articulating, accepting, and disseminating a singular, definitively Anglocentric origin of cultural studies, we all participate in the negation/denial of Other origins. What I am attempting to do here is point to the other side of things, the simple existence of one Other origin of cultural studies. The Igbo of Nigeria have a concept similar to the notion of "the other side of things," which they express quite cryptically in the saying "where something stands, something else stands beside it." My assertion is that hegemonic western cultural studies in its present form and with its present history "stands" or performs its enabling functions at the same time as performing the very negative function of denying what "stands besides it," that is, the Other histories and contemporary manifestations of cultural studies. The question I pose (but do not presume to answer) is, what are the implications for the history, current manifestations and the future of cultural studies if we take the quite plausible perspective that cultural studies started not in the center but at the margins, not with Birmingham but, say, with Kamiriithu?

With the multiplicity of traditional and emerging disciplines it encroaches onto and embraces and its bewildering array of approaches and schools, it is hardly surprising that almost no one is foolhardy enough to attempt to define cultural studies. Witness Richard Johnson's (1986/1987) underscoring of not only the difficulty but also the danger in attempting to narrowly define and hence possibly proscribe the field of cultural studies, the declaration of several cultural studies theorists (e.g., Hall, 1992) that cultural studies is not a discipline or even a hybrid of disciplines but a veritable anti-discipline, and the general agreement among cultural studies theorists that it is more accurate to speak of a number and variety of cultural studies than of a single cultural studies discourse and tradition. Cultural studies theorists, however, appear to have no such reservations when it comes to historicizing cultural studies: they readily, confidently, and consistently put forward a history that almost always ends up being ever so British. It all started in Britain, they assert in these accounts; its early, heuristic innovators were Raymond Williams, E. P. Thompson, Richard Hoggart, and George Orwell, and the first true

school of cultural studies was the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at Birmingham University. Is it not ironic that cultural studies has constructed such a blatant example of what Raymond Williams has decried in mainstream historical discourse as a "selective tradition"?

Reiterating a position taken by many cultural studies theorists, Graeme Turner (1992) warns in *British Cultural Studies: An Introduction*, that "cultural studies is a preeminently critical field: there is no orthodoxy in this field, and many have warned against the dangers of such an orthodoxy developing" (p. 4). There is an inherent contradiction between this much vaunted openendedness of what cultural studies is and will become as well as its obvious multiplicity, on the one hand, and its curiously fixed, singular geographical and specific racial and cultural (read white, male, working-class, British) purported origin, on the other. The former should at the very least make possible the passing acknowledgment of other precursors, other beginnings, even in British cultural studies texts. Also, the emphasis placed on attempting to fix the origin of systematic cultural studies (a search readily and speedily concluded at the Birmingham Centre) belies cultural studies' fluidity and anti-disciplinarity. Can cultural studies be said to have begun only with the naming of the discourse? Even if the identification of inaugural systematic and explicitly named cultural studies were crucial—which it is not—why is there hardly ever a mention of, say, the Russian discourse of culturology (which predated the Birmingham Centre by some thirty years) as the origin of cultural studies, or at least, as an alternate origin? And given a singular, Anglocentric history of cultural studies, how are we to account for the emergence of Third World discourses like South Asian subaltern studies, which, by all indications are decidedly homegrown rather than being imported and localized versions of western cultural studies?

Cultural Studies Embraces Both Academic Theorizing and Performative Acts

Cultural studies is often perceived and discussed as a purely academic endeavor. In attempting a description of the situation and spread of cultural studies, Ann Gray and Jim McGuigan (1993), for example, point out that "Cultural studies crept in from the margins, accompanied by other subjects (communication, film, media studies), to become institutionalized within the academy and to spread, in one form or another, throughout the educational system" (p. ix). With a similar emphasis on the (non)disciplinarity of cultural studies and its place in the university in

relation to established disciplines, Patrick Brantlinger (1990) constructs cultural studies as arising solely out of and being sustained exclusively by the crises in the social sciences and the humanities. Such accounts of the history and characteristics of cultural studies are quite valid as far as a consideration of cultural studies within the western academy is concerned. However, they are limited and limiting conceptions in that they do not take into account the fact that cultural studies happens not only nor even mostly within the university. Cultural studies happens heuristically in the streets, in the theatre, on the dance floor, and even in cyberspace. It is not just the study of culture, it is also the observance, heuristic evaluation, and performance of culture.

As I have pointed out, some cultural studies theorists do neither point to a particular school nor exclusively to systematic study of culture in the traditional sense but to performative acts as the manifestation of cultural studies. Manthia Diawara (1992b) in particular argues that "study" in cultural studies should go beyond the traditional academic evaluation and commentary to include creative cultural production, performance, and political intervention. He makes a strong case for the inclusion of such "performative acts" as an integral element of cultural studies. Similarly, Alan O'Connor (1989) has decried the trend in the United States which has seen cultural studies "become synonymous with various types of postmodern theorizing" (p. 407), and has argued for an emphasis on the practice of cultural studies rather than the theory of cultural studies, the doing of alternative cultural forms rather than the writing about them. He points for example to the fact that rather than undertake to merely write about film and television, Raymond Williams also scripted several television productions and attempted several film projects. While Williams's projects were for the most part thwarted because of the historical and sociopolitical climate in England, O'Connor (1989) insists Americans need to undertake similar projects and is frustrated that this is not happening as much as it could, especially since the atmosphere in America is much more conducive to such projects:

> Cultural studies in the United States will be poorer if it neglects this alternative experience. It surely would be useful to make the connection with alternative film and television producers whose work deals critically with media issues and is itself an example of an alternative cultural practice. (pp. 408–409)

What O'Connor discusses in this extract is work which is at once cultural practice (producing films) and cultural studies (addressing media issues critically) undertaken simultaneously. In short, although he does not

define it as such, O'Connor has provided an example of and argument for what Diawara would call performative acts.

Finally, in the course of delivering a tribute to Edward Thompson, Iaon Davies (1993/1994) offers a version of the origin of cultural studies which, while incidental to his main purpose and therefore perfunctory, is nevertheless quite significant since it is based on this broader, performative acts-based notion of cultural studies:

> Cultural Studies, which has become something of a buzz-word for those who see themselves as dissident academics in North America and the Antipodes, did not, of course, spring ready-made out of Larry Grossberg's imagination of what the British were up to in the 1960s and 1970s, but was a product of a very real struggle involving all the political definitions that were present then and have become more pronounced now. Those of us who marched to Aldermaston and back in the 1950s and early 1960s, who helped establish the New Left Club...who discovered Jazz with Eric Hobsbawm, who taught evening classes for the Workers' Educational Association, who fought with the Fife Socialist League, who defended (equally) Tom M'boya, Lenny Bruce, Wole Soyinka, CLR James, Vic Allen are surprised to discover that what we were doing was inventing Cultural Studies. (p. 31)

Before I go on to discuss the positive possibilities opened up by this alternative version of the origin of cultural studies, I just want to draw attention to the way even this version keeps firmly intact the hegemonic, taken-for-granted fiction that cultural studies started in the center, in England. What Davies's virtually offhand definition does bring out are crucial characteristics sometimes glossed over in or even excluded from more academic definitions. One of these is the fact that cultural studies involves overt identity/identification politics and commitment to working for social justice. A second is that cultural studies involves performative acts which extend beyond writing in and for the academy: it embraces the undertaking of hands-on cultural and political work in the larger community. If acts like those described by Davies are what constitutes the origin of cultural studies, can we not assert with equal certainty that when Mariama Ba (1982) exposed the effects of the more restrictive aspects of Muslim and African culture on women in the novella *So Long a Letter* and participated in the early women's movement in Senegal in the 1950s, she and her feminist colleagues were inventing cultural studies? Can we not say that when Leon Damas, Leopold Senghor and Aime' Cesaire came together in France in the 1930s and constructed Negritude, a decidedly African and still influential 'literary' discourse that also addresses racism and Eurocentrism and promotes Black pride, they were inventing cultur-

al studies? When Wole Soyinka (1973) wrote *Dance of a Forest* to foretell the corruption and civil strife that was to follow the euphoria of independence in Nigeria, and later tried to intercede in the Biafra war, a measure for which he was imprisoned for over two years, can he not be said to have been inventing cultural studies?

My point is that taking a performative acts conception of cultural studies seriously means recognizing a multiplicity of moments in a wide variety of locations as equally valid origins. In what Paul Gilroy (1993) would describe as "the Black Atlantic"[9] alone, the Harlem Renaissance in the United States in the 1920s, and the inception of the Negritude Movement in France in the 1930s, come to mind as origins of cultural studies. While the examples of alternate origins suggested here are limited by being race-bound, they provide an alternative to what has emerged as a system of national schools of cultural studies—American, Italian, Australian, Canadian—ironically in a time when the concept of nation, especially the racially and culturally homogeneous notion of nation, has become at once virtually untenable and a source of jingoistic ethnocentrism. More recently, the work of continental Africans like Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Ama Ata Aidoo, Chinweizu, Nawal el Saadawi, Mariama Ba, and Wole Soyinka, people who go beyond struggling to develop distinctly African approaches to literature, who have acted as sociopolitical watchdogs, done grassroots cultural work, and in some cases have been blacklisted, imprisoned, and/or exiled for their writing and political activism, could be recognized as a dispersed and heuristic manifestation of cultural studies.

All of this is not to suggest that there are two distinct types of cultural studies, academic (conducted exclusively within the academy) and performative (conducted exclusively outside the academy, in the public sphere). As Graham Murdoch (1993) suggests, what may be most important is the recovery of a politics and practice of cultural studies that undertakes both types of projects as inherently interrelated:

> We...need to restore cultural studies' commitment to making practical as well as academic interventions. This certainly involves arguing with policy makers and contributing to debates on the funding and organization of cultural activity, but it also means renewing and developing the dialogue with the subjects of our inquiries, through adult and continuing education, public speeches, journalism, and programme making. (p. 89)

Figures like Soyinka, Aidoo, and Ngugi undertake both community and academic work, and the versions of such work to be considered cul-

tural studies praxis would involve an emphasis on the interconnections between both types of projects. While academic work can be performative and forms of performance and cultural production can constitute or readily lend themselves to study, cultural studies involves or ought to involve not one or the other, nor merely the two juxtaposed, but the integration of these two sets of endeavors. The resulting performative acts would be simultaneously driven by aesthetics and utility and would constitute a means of performing, celebrating, providing instruction on, and studying African sociocultural and political issues.

The Play's the Thing Wherein We'll Catch Cultural Studies at Work

Kamiriithu represented an origin of cultural studies as a community-based, production-oriented, popular education form of study. Ngugi (1983a) points out that

> the authorities changed the name of the Kamiriithu Community Education and Cultural Centre to Kamiriithu Polytechnic and Adult Literacy Centre, while banning all theater activities in the area. At the entrance of the open air theater (now destroyed) there stood a board with the inscription Muci wa muingi in Gikuyu, and Mji wa umma in Kiswahili. Both phrases meant the same thing: A People's Cultural Centre. (p. 51)

What this extract reveals is that one of the methods employed by the Kenyan authorities to depoliticize the Kamiriithu project was to attempt to remake the Centre into a purely functional, academic project. Resistance to the measure came in the form of the people maintaining the original intent in the makeshift board they put up, which reclaimed the project in two African languages as popular, culture-focused, and politicized, and gave the lie to the new, official, English renaming and reconceptualization of the Centre and its work. Kamiriithu, therefore, waged an important struggle to remain non-academic and non-institutional, in the attempt to remain popular and political. Kamiriithu not only studied popular culture but engaged in the production of popular culture, thus pushing cultural Marxism beyond a Marxist approach to the study of culture to becoming a Marxist approach to the study and production of culture. In short, by blending study and the intellectual and ideological input of Ngugi and others on the one hand and performance, the pragmatic, and local politics on the other, Kamiriithu engaged in performative acts.

Kamiriithu is in fact only one example of what could be called performative acts-based cultural studies in continental Africa. The politiciza-

tion of orature could be said to characterize much of African orature and performance forms, both as aspects of "literature" and as performative acts. The centrality of orature and performance in traditional African culture renders a consideration of African literature limited to creative literary, written texts and the study of such texts dangerously limited:

> For an accurate conspectus of African literature, one must...look beyond the confines of academic literature, and take into account those works which find, and have found, audiences outside the ivory tower. When we include the output of the oral literary tradition, the output of 5,000 years of writing in African languages, as well as the non-academic works of entertainment being produced in European languages by African writers, we find [among other things]...that, from the gamut of its actual functions in African societies, African literature is used, not principally as flavouring in an academic diet, but for the larger cultural purpose of instructing Africans in African humanities. (Chinweizu, 1988, pp. xviii-xix)

Chinweizu reminds us that, for Africans, "literature" must mean not only written texts but the myriad of historical, thriving, oral forms; in terms of language, "literature" should involve not just the few imposed European languages but the hundreds of African languages; in terms of function, literature must venture beyond "educating the imagination" to dealing with a wide range of sociocultural and political issues; in terms of audience, "literature" must be accessible not only to those in the academy but to all African peoples. Following Okot p'Bitek's exhortation to open up Africa's universities to the general population, Chinweizu goes on to articulate the following "project of possibility":

> Imagine that the gates of Africa's universities are thrown open, and that master singers, story-tellers, poets, orators and theatre groups from Africa's villages and towns take over the lecture halls, auditoriums and open fields of African campuses and begin to recite, read and perform in the languages spoken by Africans. Imagine that they are joined by the handful of African story-tellers, poets, and drama troupes from within the universities, who carry on in the languages imposed on Africans by foreign conquerors. Imagine that, in a drawn-out literary festival, they present works commemorating national and continental events...and that every evening, they entertain and instruct their audiences with plays, fables, epics, adventure stories and tales of all sorts. Imagine that their audiences are drawn from the entire society, including villagers, townsfolk, and campus intellectuals. Imagine also that the best of the works presented are chosen by the votes of the assembled populace, and are then put together into a book. (Chinweizu, 1988, pp. xxxii)

What we have here is the proposition of a combination conference/festival, as opposed to the traditional academic conference; the integration of academic and popular "study" of culture (with popular evaluations given at least as much weight as academic evaluation of the works presented); an emphasis on participant observation as opposed to the removed, omniscient gaze of the traditional ethnographer and the objectification of the subjects of study; an interplay of literary and popular artists and forms instead of the strict demarcation between high and low cultural forms. This revisionist "literature studies" would necessarily involve the performative since the oral and performance forms it introduces are inherently dialogic; they depend on and require a participatory response from an audience. What Chinweizu calls for here is the emergence of a new hybrid form which centers orality and performance and involves African cultural workers becoming instructors in African humanities. In short, while Chinweizu is not engaged in the field of cultural studies, what he envisions is nothing short of an African performance-based cultural studies. What he illustrates is that it is in fact in the conjunction of orality, performance, and written forms, "taught" and "studied" through observance, participation, and reading, that (one version of) African cultural studies will become manifest.

What's the Relevance of Literature in the Age of Cyberspace and Orature?

We live in a decidedly electronic age, an age in which society (especially western society) is dominated by computers, video machines, the information highway, voice mail and cyberspace. It is a time in which, as Philip Corrigan (1994) laments, video machines flash and beep, clamoring for one's attention in London's pubs in which, perhaps not so coincidentally, the very act of reading a book is increasingly frowned upon. It is also a time in which, as Sara Diamond (1994) points out in the following extract, the lures of cyberspace offer exciting new possibilities for imaginative story-telling:

> **Yes!** The daughter's circular pathway through Oedipal narrative has long constituted a feminist quest myth. It can be argued that the non-linear nature of multimedia narrative introduces chance, polyvalent pathways and the disruption of traditional hierarchies and outcomes. Many of the values within feminist experimental practice are coincidentally buried within hypertextual environments. Inciting incidents, narrative peaks, troughs and closure fly out the digital window. Not only this, but the apparent circularity and non-hierarchal structure of multimedia accommodate some forms of non-Western story telling. (p. 40)

While Diamond works in video she is by no means a cyberphile (the article from which the above is excerpted consists of punchy "bytes," each starting alternatively with **Yes!**, **No!**, or **Maybe!**). Still, the extract conveys exciting possibilities for feminist expression through cyberspace and for storytelling in general that obviously compare favorably with the traditional print media and render print stodgy, restricted, and restrictive.

Accompanying the hegemony of electronics have been calls by African and African American feminist critics like Ama Ata Aidoo (quoted in Elder, 1987) and Gayl Jones (1991) for a reclaiming of orality in creative works. The basic argument is that for Africans (both continental and diasporic), orature should be considered as important as literature (if not more so) as a form of creative expression since orality is traditionally the predominant expressive and performative form for Africans both on the continent and in the diaspora. Calls for the reclaiming of orality are not coming only from Africans at the periphery and at the center, and are not being articulated only in terms of orature. An advertisement on the Toronto subway for a local radio station provides a mainstream, popular example. The advertisement consists of a picture of a newspaper with the caption "read all the news" and beside it the logo of the radio station (CFRB 1010am) with the caption, "speak all the news." This advertisement succinctly captures the revenge of the spoken word over the written word (even if, ironically, the message is written). It suggests that print is ossified and anachronistic and limits one to being an observer and passive consumer of the news. Conversely, talk radio, that happy marriage of electronics and orality, is presented as more immediate and interactive, offering one the possibility of being a participant in commenting on and even creating the news.

In short, therefore, this is a time in which the written/printed word is losing its monopoly on meaningful and prestigious communication (even in the hyperliterate west). The alternatives seem clear: literature can change with the changing times or simply die of its own irrelevance. But this is a brash, presumptuous pronouncement in the face of the fact that, while literature may be under siege, it remains very powerful and has a long history of adapting, mutating, and not only surviving but remaining hegemonic. As Michel Foucault (1988) has noted, the most powerful and self-serving characteristic of the discourse has been what he describes as "the intransitivity of literature," the "great principle that literature is concerned only with itself" (p. 309). As a definitive characteristic, intransitivity is largely responsible for the fact that as a discourse and an ideology, literature has withstood changes in the conception of meaning-making from

expressive realism to New Criticism to Formalism to Reader Response to what Catherine Belsey (1980) calls "critical practice." Jean-Paul Sartre's (1949b/1988b) *What Is Literature?* and Peter Elbow's (1990) *What Is English?* are collections of essays that testify not only to the nebulous, miasmic, indeed dubious nature of literature and its study, but more importantly to its enduring nature in spite of the exposure of these characteristics, which ought to seriously undermine it as a discourse and a legitimate academic discipline. Roland Barthes (quoted in Eagleton, 1983) testified to this vexing contradiction when he defined the discipline in apparent exasperation in these words: "literature is what gets taught" (p. 197).

The Death of Literature May Be Wishful Thinking to Some but Others Have Been Observed Doing a Little More Than Wishing

Is it any wonder, given this situation that Robert Morgan (1993) has declared that "literature is not going to go away just because we wish it would?"[10] But if literature is not going to go away, there are those who have decided to overtly politicize the supposedly apolitical praxis of literature, and others who have decided to opt out of it, or at least situate themselves inside/outside the discourse, and others still who have argued strongly that its demise is imminent if not a *fait accompli* and proceeded to operate on this assumption. In Canada the literary factor which guarantees literature's apolitical nature, namely aesthetics, has been usurped by the postcolonialist critic and educator Arun Mukherjee (1988) in her construction of a decidedly political aesthetics, centered around a politics of social difference and postcolonial resistance in what she calls "an aesthetics of opposition." In Latin America, the emphasis has not been on exposing the political nature of literature; instead, taking that politics for granted, Latin American critics have utilized/appropriated literature for the perennial examination of Latin American identity and sociopolitics (as in the Ariel/Caliban debate). Similarly, in Nigeria, Kenya, and South Africa critics like Wole Soyinka (1976), Omafume Onoge (1985), Lewis Nkosi (1981), D. S. Izevbaye (1971) and Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1986) have all insisted that African literature is both political and utilitarian and that these characteristics ought to be reflected in the study of African literature. In England by the time Janet Batsleer et al. (1985) had finished their exercise in *Rewriting English*, taking into account cultural feminist and class politics, they had to ask themselves whether the discourse they had constructed could still be called literature. What they had done in fact was not simply politicize literature but argue themselves *out of* literature *into*

cultural studies. This transition is not surprising since at the time they were operating out of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies. This is how they characterize the relationship between literature studies and the new discourse of cultural studies that was evolving at the Birmingham Centre:

> It should also be said that difficulties with the idea of "literature," and a sense that any work that started there would be likely to remain imprisoned within the word's strong magnetic field, had another, more contingent source. This was the decidedly unsociable relations between cultural studies at the Birmingham Centre, where we were working, and literary criticism....By the mid seventies, cultural studies retained few of the affiliations or concerns of Williams's *Culture and Society* or Hoggart's *Uses of Literacy*. In its much firmer engagement with Marxism and, rather differently, with feminism, it had turned to an interest in cultural manifestations and speculative developments that were not by any means hospitable to the idea of literature, as the word would be understood in a university English department. (Batsleer et al., 1985, pp. 2–3)

What we have documented here goes well beyond how a particular small set of theorists/critics engaged in a specific book project find themselves constrained by the limits of the discourse and praxis of "literature." There is an indication of how the Centre in which these individuals worked was constructing an alternative to approaching literature within literary studies. Furthermore, there is a clear indication of the new discourse (cultural studies) already mutating, changing, the characteristics of malleability, adaptability, and responsiveness to concrete politics and changes in cultural and social developments that have become hallmarks of cultural studies. Finally, there is also a strong hint of the fact that the new ways of analyzing and utilizing "literature" within cultural studies were not going to sit well with traditional English departments.

In his *Literary Into Cultural Studies*, Antony Easthope (1991) undertakes a historical account of the transition from literary to cultural studies in which he argues forcefully that in spite of its apparently continued dominance, the old discourse of literature was being or would inevitably be overtaken by the emerging discourse of cultural studies:

> In this book I mean to review critically the whole development separating the positions of Leavis and Eagleton. In a sentence: I shall argue that the old paradigm has collapsed, that the moment of symptomatically registered concern with theory is now passing, and that a fresh paradigm has emerged, its status as such proven because we can more or less agree on its terms and use them. In part, therefore, this will be a history but a history which means to make some active intervention in the present process of transition. 'Pure' literary study, though

> dying, remains institutionally dominant in Britain and North America while the more comprehensive analysis of what I prefer to call signifying practises is still struggling to be born. In advocating a kind of 'unified field theory' for the combined study of literary texts and those from popular culture this book will welcome the opportunity to be polemical. My title is intended as both indicative ('Literary into cultural studies') and an imperative ('Literary *into* cultural studies!'). (Easthope, 1991, p. 5)

As the extract reveals, Easthope does not set out to be a mere documenter, a neutral historian, but a committed (and if necessary polemic) advocate of the transition from literary to cultural studies. The book is therefore not simply an account but also a political intervention intended to act as a catalyst that would contribute to expediting the transition.

Antony Easthope's (1991) *Literary Into Cultural Studies* is in fact one of several existing accounts and justifications of transitions from literary to cultural studies. Easthope's book-length account is interesting because it goes beyond asserting that a transition from literary to cultural studies is possible and is being undertaken to providing examples of what the new discourse is, through his juxtaposition of analyses of both literary and popular texts. Robert Morgan's (1993) "Transitions From English to Cultural Studies" is an essay-length account and is valuable for different reasons. It provides a carefully and extensively documented case of how transitions have been made from literary to cultural studies and, more significantly, illustrates what this means for the "English" high school classroom (i.e., the erstwhile literature studies-dominated classroom). While interesting, well-documented and persuasive, almost all such accounts, including the two mentioned here, restrict their discussion to how the transitions are taking place or have taken place in EuroAmerica. This limited scope contributes, however inadvertently, to the perpetuation of Eurocentric knowledge production and the denial of parallel developments taking place at the margins.[11] Also, it is curious that despite Easthope's openly declared passionate advocacy of transitions from literary to cultural studies, he does not reveal the roots of his personal/political investment in advocating and participating in the transitions from literary to cultural studies. In contrast with Morgan, who sets out only to be a chronicler of the transitions, Easthope's catalytic advocacy and participation would appear to demand a project and the articulation of the politics that initiated his passionate investment and underscores his commitment. What I have attempted to illustrate here is that it is perhaps more useful to give a more wide-ranging, even globally diverse, account of transitions from literary to cultural studies.

Whether in terms of a more overtly politicized literature or in terms of a radical shift from literary analysis to cultural studies, the praxis of the various figures and groups in various sites mentioned here have insisted on refuting the supposed intransitivity of literature. They have chosen to engage literature not by asking conventional literary questions but by seeking to (re)conceptualize literature as a discourse that has relevance to wider sociopolitical issues. In the process they have beaten the circular, self-serving discourse of literature into an incisive tool of social analysis.

A similar process has also been undertaken in different sites by politicized critics who have dared to step inside/outside the discourse to ask the fundamental and crucial question, what is literature?[12] Jean-Paul Sartre (1949/1988b) answered this question by insisting that we need to try to answer not only what literature is but also what it can become in more political terms. In *Caliban and Other Essays*, Fernandez Retamar (1989) approached the question differently and asked how literature can contribute to the furthering of a non-literary politics (in his case an understanding and celebration of pro-proletariat, Black-identified, Latin American identity)? Eagleton (1983) declared that we should approach literature by asking not what it is but why one would want to engage it in the first place.

I want to suggest yet another approach, to step inside/outside literature and ask, given a particular cultural/sociopolitical issue to be addressed, does literature have a contribution to make in addressing it? This is a stance that starts with the primacy of a given political project and which emphasizes pedagogy, a stance from which literature is rendered incidental, indeed optional.

To start from a project or a sociocultural issue is to render literature questions secondary and give primacy to project-oriented questions. For example, in my particular project of examining African identity, the important questions become the following: What are continental and diasporic African identities, and how and by whom are they being constructed? What are the conscious and unconscious purposes that African identities and identifications serve? What forms, artifacts, and texts contribute to these constructions? Is one to employ a purely contemporary scope or undertake a historicizing of the issue (many contemporary constructions of African identity are associated with more formalized historical constructions of African identity broadly defined, for example, the politics of the rap group Arrested Development draws on the politics of the Black Power Movement of the 1960s and contemporary Afrocentrism has links with Pan-Africanism). How do we address difference (ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, social class) within the cate-

gory "African identity?" How, and perhaps more importantly, why should such a topic be addressed in the classroom and at what level? Who can/should teach such a topic? In other words, is it not a Black thing non-Black teachers would not understand? To what kind of students should such a topic be addressed? (Some feel it is quite futile to start addressing issues about racial minorities if one is teaching a predominantly or all-white class). What theoretical framework can/should be employed in addressing such an issue? Which disciplines could/should be utilized in addressing this issue? Only incidentally does the question of what, if anything, literature can contribute to our examination of this issue arise. It is clearly possible in fact to address the issue without including an examination of literature.

How Do We Read Literary Texts in a Cultural Studies Class?

Because cultural studies is a veritable anti-discipline and a relatively new discourse, its pedagogy is not, should not, and indeed cannot be standardized. However, it should be noted that several changes in orientation and approach would have to be undertaken in the reading (note that I avoid the loaded literary term "appreciation") of literary texts in the cultural studies classroom. The primary shift that needs to be undertaken is from literary criticism to what the early cultural studies theorist Hoggart (1969) referred to as "cultural reading" of texts. Marnie O'Neill's (1991) "Teaching Literature as Cultural Criticism" provides an important historical account of shifts in appreciation from the cultural heritage model, to the new literacy or personal response model, to a cultural criticism model. A shortcoming of O'Neill's account is that it suggests that cultural studies is merely a new development in a progression of approaches to literature in particular and English studies in general. I want to suggest that, although cultural studies represents in one sense a progression in meaning-making, it should not be reduced to an aspect of English studies. *Rather cultural studies must be seen as constituting a radical break with the discourse of English studies*. Cultural studies then could be seen both as a new approach in English studies and more accurately as a new, more comprehensive discourse which can embrace aspects of English studies. The relationship between the two is one which involves not the incorporation of cultural studies into English studies, but the transition being made from English studies to cultural studies both as an already occurring phenomenon and as a necessary, progressive development. This dual perspective is captured by Easthope (1991) in his explication of the title of his

work: "My title is intended as both indicative ('Literary into cultural studies') and an imperative ('Literary *into* cultural studies!')."

In view of this characterization of the relationship between the two discourses, the following is a sampling of the changes that would characterize a transition from literary criticism to cultural readings of texts.

First, from a cultural studies perspective the identity of a given text is not guaranteed in advance. In other words it is counterproductive to search for the meaning of a text as one would in undertaking a literary approach. Rather, one ought to start from the premise that a given text will have a multiplicity of meanings depending on historical and sociopolitical as well as personal interpretive factors.

Second, instead of identifying and applying a historically or currently dominant theory of meaning-making, the cultural studies approach would consider not what the text means but what it means to different readers at different times in different places and given different projects. In other words, neither reception theory (the author as god), nor reader response (the reader as god), nor transaction (the author, the reader, and the text as three-headed god) suffice, since the emphasis is not on merely making meaning but on the play and interplay of and shifts in meanings (a complex process reflected in Jacques Derrida's notion of *differance*); on how such interplay and shifts are made possible by factors internal to the author, the text and the reader as well as external to all three; and on the ways such multiple meanings shed light on perceptions of social practices.

Third, selection of texts for consideration is based not on literary criteria such as the already established canonicity of the text nor, as Foucault (1988) admits undertaking, the deliberate and provocative "serious" examination and promotion of "bad literature," but on the perceived relevance of the text to the issue/project at hand. Texts which are especially open to multiple and diverse interpretations within this category and which appear to have particular significance for addressing the issue/project at hand are therefore particularly attractive. Thus the juxtaposition of various forms and the juxtaposition of texts of high and low culture become not only viable but expected.

Fourth, while literary approaches afford the option of undertaking an appreciation of texts from a position of distance or engagement, a cultural studies approach would demand that appreciation be undertaken from a position of engagement. Thus if aesthetics is to be brought into play at all, conventional, supposedly apolitical aesthetics—which Tony Bennet (1990) has dismissed as "really useless knowledge"—should be eschewed

in favor of more overtly engaged and political forms of aesthetics. In the case of this project, for example, works like the African American Julian Mayfield's (1971) *You Touch My Black Aesthetics*, *I'll Touch Yours*, the continental Africans Chinweizu, Jemie, and Madubuike's (1983) notion of bolakaja criticism[13] and Arun Mukherjee's aesthetics of resistance become particularly important.

In attempting to undertake cultural studies in the classroom, some educators have taken up the application of literary criticism to non-literary material. Stanley Fish (1987) has offered the following vigorous critique of such "cultural studies" exercises:

> you can do a literary reading of anything, but no matter what you do it of, it will still be a literary reading, a reading that asks literary questions—about form, content, style, unity, dispersal, dissemination—and gets literary answers.... I find it bizarre that so many people today think that by extending the techniques of literary analysis to government proclamations or diplomatic communiques or advertising copy you make criticism more political and more aware of its implications in extra-institutional matters; all you do (and this is nothing to sneer at) is expand the scope of the institution's activity, plant the flag of literary studies on more and more territory. (Fish, 1987, pp. 249–250).

Fish's point is that, ironically, efforts to break free of the limitations of literary criticism by applying it to non-literary texts only perpetuate, strengthen, and extend the hegemony of literature and literary studies. What I have attempted to indicate here in fact could be considered the opposite of what Fish warns about: my interest is in indicating the viability of a discourse that undertakes cultural studies readings of literary texts. Even the development of cultural studies readings of literary texts, however, is no guarantee of a successful break with the discourse of literature. This is because the approach, methodology, and discourse of the fledgling anti-discipline of cultural studies is vulnerable to co-optation, neutralization, and negation in schools, colleges, and universities, the academic institutions in which the disciplines it encroaches onto hold hegemonic sway. Antony Easthope (1991) provides this succinct warning about the vulnerability of cultural studies in relation to literary studies and English departments: "recuperation is always possible" (p. 178).

Are African Literary and Cultural Works "Always Already" Cultural Studies?

I want to point now, in a perfunctory manner, to ways in which many African literary and cultural works constitute "always, already" a heuristic

form of cultural studies. For example, while Tony Bennet (1990) may have caused waves in the west in the 1990s by declaring that literary aesthetics is "really useless knowledge," African critics like Izevbaye (1971) have insisted since the early 1970s that African literature is utilitarian and the notion of art-for-art's-sake should never be allowed to become a characteristic of African literary criticism. Similarly, critics in the west, like Catherine Belsey (1980), Terry Eagleton (1984), and Janet Batsleer et al. (1985), have had to articulate overt arguments to expose/emphasize the sociopolitical nature of literature and consciously undermine the rigid divide between literature and pop writings that is firmly established and taken for granted (e.g., Easthope, 1991, Eagleton 1993). Conversely, Henry Louis Gates's pronouncement that African American literature is inherently political[14] is equally valid for continental African literature since it flies in the face of the Eurocentric conception that Africans, whether continental or diasporic, have and can produce "no culture, no civilization, no long historical past" (Fanon, 1967, p. 34). Modern (colonial and post-colonial) African literature has therefore inevitably been inherently political, while African orature has generally been simultaneously classical and "popular," with a sociocultural emphasis on the community. Also, it would appear that the crucial issue facing African critics interested in a cultural studies approach is not so much the high/low culture divide but rather what could be called the performative/written divide.

As I have argued elsewhere (Wright, 1994a; 1995b), works like Ngugi's *Moving the Centre* offer the possibility of beginning to illustrate, somewhat more systematically, the viability as well as the possible problems of African cultural studies.[15] Cultural issues and cross-cultural currents are so predominant in *Moving the Centre* that this work virtually demands to be considered for inclusion in the nebulous, miasmic field that is cultural studies. Perhaps we might even begin to think of works like *Moving the Centre* (together with other African texts like Soyinka's (1993) *Art, Dialogue and Outrage* and Achebe's (1988) *Hopes and Impediments*) as "always already" African cultural studies. The fact that the definition, scope, and concerns of cultural studies are supposedly constantly differed and differing would appear to make such a consideration welcome. At the same time, an understanding of Ngugi's work in general cautions against an unreflexive and ultimately dangerous appropriation of *Moving the Centre* for what is arguably the Eurocentric, hegemonic discourse of cultural studies.

Conclusion: Can You Say "African Cultural Studies" Without Biting Your Tongue?

If much of African literary and sociocultural writings appear to constitute heuristic cultural studies, why is there not already a tradition and wide acknowledgment of African cultural studies? The immediate and rather superficial answer is that, although there is virtually no recognition of the type of heuristic African cultural studies, I have been discussing here, there is cultural studies in Africa which can be said to be loosely modeled on western cultural studies (e.g., work being done at the Centre for Cultural and Media Studies (CCMS) at the University of Natal in South Africa). The fact that this tradition is largely received from the west creates significant problems, however. First, ironically, it is a marginalized branch of cultural studies. One does not come across references in very many western cultural studies works to the work being done in sites like the CCMS. Further, from my limited observation of interchange between such African schools and western schools, it would appear that there is an assumption that what is at stake is the application of an established discourse (EuroAmerican cultural studies) on African soil.[16] In short, the historicizing of the "anti-discipline" has been Eurocentric and therefore not cognizant of Other figures/centers doing similar work, including cultural studies in Africa. Second, while the CCMS has made some effort to draw on the more diverse, heuristic form of African cultural studies that predates it and continues to operate around it, it does not necessarily accede that such work is precursive or heuristic cultural studies. Even so, most African theorists and practitioners who do "heuristic cultural studies" do not operate within the established discourses of cultural studies. For example, while they do address issues taken up in cultural studies in their work, African figures like Ngugi, Maja-Pearce, Achebe, and Soyinka do not label themselves cultural studies workers and provide at most a tacit acknowledgment of western discourses of cultural studies.[17]

Many significant steps have been undertaken which directly or incidentally keep cultural studies in flux by addressing the emerging tendency toward orthodoxy and the establishment of Anglo-American cultural studies as a universal hegemony. Such acts include the advocacy of theorists like Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1993a) and Alan O'Connor (1993) for what they independently conceive of as "transnational cultural studies," and what Kuan-Hsing Chen (1992) calls "a new internationalist localism"[18]; the distinction drawn and tension held between Black studies and "mainstream" cultural studies in Manthia Diawara's (1992b) "Black Studies, Cultural Studies, Performative Acts"; the refusal of the white

hegemonic notions of nation and culture in England in Paul Gilroy's (1987) *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack*, and Hazel Carby et al.'s (CCCS, 1982) *The Empire Strikes Back*; resistance to the establishment of Anglo-American cultural studies as a universal hegemony and to the traditional conference format through such conference/festival events as the "Dismantle Fremantle" Confest in Australia and the Visual Voice Festival in South Africa[19]; and perhaps most significant, the evolution of South-South cultural studies such as the emergence of Latin American subaltern studies.[20] It is Kuan-Hsing Chen (1992) who probably puts the general case of these detractors best when he describes his specific stance as that of a Chinese/Taiwanese intellectual who "appropriates" cultural studies for his work in the Third World:

> [I want to signal] my departure from Eurocentric and Anglocentric cultural studies, which needs to change gear and slow down. But it would be foolish for me to give up cultural studies entirely. This critique is thus offered from within and without; strongly motivated to win friends and alliances, among "those friends with whom, out of a different loyalty, I must now openly disagree".... (p. 476)

As Chen indicates, he and other critics of "mainstream cultural studies" are not intent on "dismantling cultural studies," but rather, they position themselves inside/outside cultural studies to address the hegemony of EuroAmerican cultural studies and in some cases to put forward alternative suggestions of the forms cultural studies might take and how it might travel globally.

What I have attempted to do here is add my voice to this chorus of ambivalence, to speak out as one of those who call cultural studies home but who also find that, as John Hartley (1992) puts it, "cultural studies is not hedged but hegemonic" (p. 307). I firmly believe that constant deconstruction of Eurocentric, hegemonic cultural studies can contribute significantly to the construction of progressive transnational cultural studies; that resisting orthodoxy and keeping cultural studies multiple and in constant flux can contribute to making it democratic. Deconstruction in and of itself cannot construct transnational and democratic cultural studies[21]: it will also take the articulation, examination, and/or acknowledgment of Other forms of cultural studies and related discourses in a global dialogue of cultural analysis. Such measures of construction and deconstruction are crucial elements in the struggle to make cultural studies an acceptable universal home in Meaghan Morris's definition of home, that is, "not a place of origin, but an aspect of a process which it enables [...] but does not precede [...] not an enclosure, but a way of going outside" (Morris,

1991, p. 454: quoted in Ien Ang, 1992, p. 312). I can only be at home in my cultural studies home when I can say "African cultural studies" without non-Africans raising an eyebrow and making me feel like biting my tongue. Better yet, I can only be at home in my cultural studies home when non-Africans engage African cultural studies without my raising an eyebrow and wishing they would bite their tongue.

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Chapter Three

The Play's the Thing Wherein We'll Find Cultural Studies at Work: African Drama as Cultural Studies?

Drama and Empowerment: A Personal Note

In the 1970s, Freetown had a vibrant theater culture, one which involved the general public having an unprecedentedly high interest in theatrical productions (especially of popular theater plays written locally in the vernacular, Krio). At the individual school level there were inter-house competitions, and the best actors were chosen from these to come together to represent the school at the highly competitive inter-secondary-school drama competition held each year. As a very active and enthusiastic member of my school's drama club, I took part (with increasingly bigger roles over the years) in both inter-house competitions for five of the seven years of my high school career and represented the school in the inter-school competition in the last four. The inter-school competitions became well known as showcases for "undiscovered talent," and the semi-professional theater groups[1] began to utilize the productions as talent spotting and recruitment events. In my last but one year (lower sixth form), our school won second prize for the second year in a row. Many felt ours was far and away the best performance but that the school had won too many times in the past and there was a need to spread the laurels around. When the oldest and most prestigious semi-professional group, Tabule Experimental Theatre, did not invite any of the members of the school that had won first prize but instead invited an unprecedented three members of our school to join them, we took this as proof of the fact that we were in fact better actors. Particularly sweet was the fact that only the usual one member from the school that won was asked to do a stint with a semi-professional group, and the group he joined was hardly of the same stature as Tabule.

Being one of three student actors from St. Edward's Secondary School who were "discovered" by Tabule Experimental Theatre in the late 1970s, I have firsthand knowledge of how empowering involvement in the the-

ater can be for the individual student and the community at large. I was a member of Tabule for just over a year, and during that period my friends, Maurice Shaw (who is also a cousin of mine) and the now renowned Dennis Nelson Streeter (who rose to become assistant director of Tabule), and I worked closely with these semi-professionals and appeared in two of Tabule's most successful plays, *Modenloh* and *Wan Paun Flesh*.[2]

Though I always aspired to being a real "bad boy" I was in reality an extremely shy, introverted teenager. However, I discovered how liberating, exhilarating, and empowering it was to be an actor when I took part in intra- and inter-secondary school dramatic performances. My insecurities faded away as I discovered the confidence-building power that comes with being able to put on a credible performance, to capture and maintain the attention of a large audience. I left my shyness and introversion behind, and enjoyed the liberation and exhilaration that comes with abandoning my own characteristics and taking on other characteristics, becoming the character I played. I learned to work with and relate better to other actors and the people backstage, to make forceful arguments about how a character should be played, and so on. I became more self-reliant and developed a serious work ethic when I realized that it was only when I had my lines memorized, and only when I had rehearsed my part thoroughly (with the cast and on my own), that I could deliver a credible performance. In the end it was up to me to make the character I played come alive on stage.[3]

These benefits were multiplied several times when I joined Tabule, and my self-esteem and self-confidence received a dramatic boost from the endorsement involved in being discovered by and invited to join a semi-professional company. My friends and I were wide-eyed and tried to absorb as much as possible but found that instead of merely being treated as apprentice actors, our input was solicited and taken seriously on everything from wardrobe to stage directions, from character development to ticket pricing. I believe I learned more about the theater in that one year than I did in all my experience before and after that year. Once the year was over, all three of us were invited to become permanent members of Tabule. My cousin was leaving for the United States and he declined. I was headed for university and believed that trying to carry an academic load and the responsibilities of being a member of a semi-professional group would be too much, and I declined also. My friend Dennis Nelson Streeter joined the group, even though he was also entering university.

Beyond my own personal growth as an actor and a person, my involvement in theater revealed to me the potential power of theater as a vehicle for social comment, and an agent for consciousness-raising and social transformation.[4] When *Poyoton Wahala*[5] was first performed (written and produced by another theater company), I considered this play, which was a thinly disguised satire on the government of the day and of the foibles of Sierra Leoneans in general, merely as interesting and timely. However, as the play was performed night after night to packed audiences, people started to repeat the jokes in school, to assert the truth of the portrayal of corruption on the streets, and to speak out in their places of work about how fed up they were with the government. The government considered the situation serious enough to ban the play.[6] More than anything else it was the extremity of the government's response that convinced me of the potential of the theater for consciousness-raising. After this incident, rumors abounded about every theatrical production: there were government spies at performances, the scripts of even the most innocuous plays were being read, scrutinized, and (mis)interpreted in the Ministry of Sports and Cultural Affairs, a blacklist of actors and playwrights was being compiled and people on it would be arrested, if not in connection with a particular production, then at the whim of government officials. A new kind of bravado was required to be a playwright or an actor: rehearsals were punctuated by not-so-funny jokes about which members of the group could possibly be government spies, and latecomers were asked if it took that long to file a report about a bunch of witless actors. Without actually saying it, everyone dared everyone else to stay the course. Theater was rendered radical, and to be in theater was to be a risk taker, an agitator. People showed their defiance of the government clampdown by attending the theater in even larger numbers, eager to see which groups still had the gall to criticize the government and just as eager to tease out the increasingly subtle references or even manufacture that criticism from the most innocent of lines.[7] Fearing for my safety (though they did not actually attend the theater themselves), my parents advised me to drop the whole acting thing, and after trying, unsuccessfully, to allay their fears, I told them I had resigned from Tabule while I secretly continued to be involved in the troupe. This atmosphere characterized theater in Sierra Leone for several years, after which a combination of factors caused public interest to wane, with low attendances and mediocre scripts and performances characterizing theater in the mid-1980s.

Introducing African Drama as Cultural Studies

The link between politics and theater has long been acknowledged both in the west and in Africa.[8] As Art Borreca (1993) points out

> Ever since theatre emerged as an aesthetic mode, both theatre practitioners and politicians, from Thespis and Solon to Harold Pinter and Ronald Reagan, have *had* to deal with the affinities between politics and theatre. As Erving Goffman wrote, "All the world is not, of course, a stage, but the crucial ways in which it isn't are not easy to specify" (Goffman 1959: 72). Substituting "politics" for the "world," the same might be said about political life. (p. 56)

From the perspective of theater, it could be argued that two of the elements of the relationship between theater and politics are first, the fact that theater is in itself inherently political and, second, that theater could be undertaken to serve political ends. It is the second of these elements, as it applies to the African continent in general and Sierra Leone more specifically, that I am particularly concerned with here. The theater's potential as an agent for social and political comment, consciousness-raising, activism, and celebration and interrogation of traditional cultures is well-documented (e.g., Kidd, 1979; Kidd & Rashid, 1984). Although this potential cannot be said to have ever been fully realized in Sierra Leone, the general population caught a glimpse of the theater's potential in the late 1970s and the early 1980s, and I for one am anxious to help revive that atmosphere and create spaces in which these and other potential uses for theater can be realized.

However, popular theater is not necessarily synonymous with drama as performative act or cultural studies. Drama as performative act must be drama which is simultaneously performance-based, politicized, reflexive, and a form of study of culture. In Canada the work of the Black theater troupe, Theatre in the Rough, could in fact be considered drama as cultural studies. Walker-Alleyene (1991) points out that Theatre in the Rough is socially committed and involves a fusion of calypso rhythms, rap beats, dance, acting, and storytelling. It is "participatory drama, along with experimental education techniques, the primary goal of the company is to get participants of all ages directly involved, and exploring issues of race relations and multiculturalism firsthand" (Walker-Alleyene, 1991, pp. 10–11). The troupe's director, Amah Harris, makes a distinction between mainstream theater (as it is understood in North America) and drama (as her troupe practices it) by pointing out that "drama is a process which employs the techniques of theater, but it is the process itself, rather than the finished product, which is important" (Harris, quoted in Walker-

Alleyene, 1991, p. 11). At the end of each performance there is an opportunity for the audience to ask the cast and crew questions on anything from the troupe's formation and group dynamics to the specific performance to the educational information presented. In return the Troupe requests that the children in the audience undertake further research on their own ethnic/racial background and some element of the information presented, and write a letter to the troupe about what they liked/disliked about the performance. Theatre in the Rough also conducts workshops on the same issues portrayed and addressed in their performances.

What we have in the case of Theatre in the Rough, therefore, are the elements that transform theater not merely into drama but into performative act. The combination of various forms (acting, music, storytelling, dance) in itself is reflective of a characteristic of cultural studies, namely, interdisciplinarity. The emphasis on the performance itself and audience commentary on the performance introduce the elements of reflexivity and the study of the performative act. The fact that the overall goal is to introduce historical and political information in an interesting and exciting format, combined with the fact that a participatory form of workshop is utilized in achieving these aims, secures the political commitment and educational aspects of the performative act.

My concern in this chapter is with articulating a form of African drama as performative act. However, the form I will discuss is necessarily more restricted than that which can be undertaken by a troupe like Theatre in the Rough since I am attempting to work within a formal education system and to talk about drama as a school subject. Therefore, it is with my background in theater, in combination with my background as a teacher of drama as literature and as a teacher of cultural studies, that I engage in this chapter in the articulation of drama as cultural studies, primarily as it would operate as a viable secondary school subject. More specifically, what I undertake here is an examination of what a transition from drama in the literature studies class to drama in the cultural studies class would entail.[9] While I have presented arguments thus far in the book about how and why such a transition should be made in a general sense, this chapter affords me the opportunity to address the transition in very concrete terms. I situate my argument in the context of the status quo of literature studies in Sierra Leone and put forward African drama as cultural studies not only as a possible genre of cultural studies in the secondary school curriculum but also as an indication of how, in very concrete terms, the new subject of cultural studies could be introduced into the secondary school system at the General Certificate of Education

Ordinary and Advanced level curricula (GCE "O" and "A" Levels) in "anglophone" West Africa.[10]

My consideration is primarily focused on African drama texts, but my discussion also deals with drama in a more comprehensive sense. I am concerned with both African and non-African drama and with both written and oral texts. Following the cultural studies maxim requiring that one focus on the local and what one is already conversant with as one's subject of inquiry, I have decided to focus on issues pertaining to drama in Sierra Leone. Since education is an unfairly marginalized aspect of (or intersecting discourse with) cultural studies, I am also interested in taking up this investigation firmly within an educational context. While this entire book deals with the future as what Roger Simon would refer to as "a contested vision," I attempt in this chapter to take on, in very concrete terms, the changes that would have to be made in the present arrangements, taking into account all the restrictions involved, in order to begin to introduce cultural studies into the educational system of a specific African country. My vision of African cultural studies is as a discourse that would be included and legitimated as part of the educational curriculum from secondary school to university level. In much of this book my discussion is conducted around the prospects of African cultural studies at the university or post-university level. In this chapter, however, I attempt to indicate how African cultural studies could be introduced as a subject in the secondary school curriculum, one that would eventually replace literary-based literature studies.[11] Although I focus much of the time on the specifics of the Sierra Leonean educational system, I also extrapolate from that situation to indicate what African drama as cultural studies means for the entire continent. The viability of this extrapolation is facilitated by the fact that the General Certificate of Education is a West Africa-wide system of uniform curricula and examinations governed by the West African Examinations Council. Changes that can be made to the GCE curriculum in Sierra Leone therefore are applicable to any anglophone West African country.

Because I want to start from the status quo of literature studies in Sierra Leone, I believe it is worth reiterating at least one argument that supports the transition from literary studies to cultural studies. I therefore wish to point out that I take what the literary theorist Eagleton (1983) describes as a strategic approach to "literary criticism." As he explains it, "this means asking first not what the object is or how we should approach it, but why we should engage it in the first place" (p. 194). I do not approach "literary practice" as an end in itself but as a means to an end.

In fact, I approach literary practice in order to go beyond it, in the effort to construct and put forward a utilitarian approach to the study of "texts." Within the cultural studies framework I outlined in Chapter Two, I undertake the reconceptualization of drama studies as cultural studies mainly in terms of how such a reconceptualization informs and furthers the larger project of articulating an African cultural studies.

It is this strategic approach I bring to my examination of education in Sierra Leone and of drama education more specifically. My basic contention in this chapter is that there is an urgent need to decolonize and Africanize education in Sierra Leone. I make this call for educational reform because education in Sierra Leone is still based to a large extent on the inherited British model, such that the curriculum content, language, and pedagogy do not reflect the values, worldviews, and concerns of Sierra Leoneans. Consequently education does not provide Sierra Leoneans with an adequate means of addressing their history, culture, politics, and socioeconomic condition. I therefore put forward several general proposals for decolonizing and Africanizing education in Sierra Leone and make a case for what I am calling African drama as cultural studies education in the Sierra Leonean school system. It is my hope that the explication of African drama as cultural studies will illustrate how the general changes I propose could be implemented in concrete terms in the curriculum of educational institutions; provide an initial indication of how a link could be established between school and community; and enable students to begin to celebrate, interrogate, and transform their culture, identity, and society and participate in the evolution of a more united and democratic Sierra Leonean and African society.

What exactly is African drama as cultural studies? As I conceive of it, African drama as cultural studies is utilitarian, production-oriented drama which is essentially African in form and content and which serves to empower students and contributes to the furtherance of the African project of possibility. The following are some of its basic characteristics.

First, its emphasis is on drama as performance rather than drama as literature. While the emphasis on orature and performance does not preclude the study of written texts, the emphasis is on dramatic production in all its aspects. This emphasis on performance is reflective of both the predominance of performance in traditional African communicative, ritual and entertainment forms and the fact that cultural studies should involve, as Manthia Diawara (1992b) has emphasized, not only the study of culture but also performative acts. In terms of African performance forms, I was reminded of the ineptness of attempting to capture such

forms in written form when I read Heribert Hinzen et al.'s (1987) *Fishing in the Rivers of Sierra Leone: Oral Literature*. Some of the stories in this text are very familiar to me, and I was struck by how simplistic, unardorned, and unexciting they were in written form. This is not to say that the writers had done a poor job: rather, the elements that made these stories great in oral form simply could not be adequately captured in writing. Gone were the dialogic elements; the musical instruments, and the rhythmic clapping that made the repetition of phrases and statements musical and so much fun. Instead the stories merely read like boring repetitions. Gone were the dramatic pauses of the storyteller that created tension in the storyline; gone were the points at which the audience would participate (reports of this attempted to create a vicarious experience, but this hardly substitutes for real participation). In short, I have come to the firm conclusion that performance forms should be performed and that the attempt to capture such forms in print, while well-meaning, is misguided and even counterproductive. In terms of Diawara's assertion that cultural studies should also involve performance, I would emphasize "should," because Diawara's exhortation has not necessarily been widely implemented (though there is much lip service paid to performance) in the development of cultural studies in the west. The Dismantle Fremantle Confest in Australia remains one of the few performance-driven conferences, and though alternative formats are often solicited in cultural studies conferences, they appear to be more talked about than performed in the actual sessions. My intention here is to draw quite explicitly on this intersection of emphasis on performance in traditional African forms (where it is already predominant) and in cultural studies in general (where it ought to become more prevalent), in fashioning African drama as cultural studies.

Second, African drama as cultural studies is principally African. In the most basic of cultural studies terms, it is the study of African culture through drama. This means it emphasizes African dramatic forms and takes African historical and contemporary issues as its principal themes. In terms of African dramatic forms, many African forms would be considered hybrids in terms of western categorizations. A Sierra Leonean hunting society performance, for example, is a "hybrid form" that involves storytelling (it is basically the enactment of a hunting expedition and the retelling of how the animal was killed), acting (the hunter and prey roles are acted out by players in costume), dance (the hunter and prey roles are performed in dance with no dialogue), drumming, singing, and flute playing (drumming is an inextricable part of the performance, not just an accompaniment to the performance). African writers such as

Wole Soyinka, Okot p'Bitek, and Ama Ata Aidoo not only deploy such African hybridity in their works but further complicate forms by putting their works into writing and including western elements such as divisions of plays into acts and scenes. In terms of African historical and contemporary issues, elements of African history and present local or continental issues could be explored through existing works or through works created by students. In Chapter Four of this book I undertake such an exercise myself by examining the notion that literature studies reconceptualized as African cultural studies can contribute significantly to the discourse and process of development in Africa.

This does not preclude the inclusion of elements from other parts of the world being utilized as material for study and production. However, African elements (i.e., texts, themes, musical instruments, costumes, etc.) must form the core and make up the larger part of the curriculum. As a caveat to this point, I should point out that because cultures are always permeable and because universally cultures and identities are hybrid and pastiche, respectively, it will not always be possible or even necessary to identify what is distinctly, uniquely, and exclusively African culture.

Third, African drama as cultural studies is critical. This means that while it portrays and celebrates African cultures, it also interrogates them. In other words, it addresses problematic aspects of African cultures in general (e.g., tribalism, sexism, regionalism, heterosexism and heteronormativity, etc.), and how those factors are implicated in students' lives in particular. This element of interrogation bears emphasizing since certain strands of Afrocentrism and Black empowerment discourses being developed in the diaspora seem intent on constructing a dangerously uniform, already united and cohesive, Eden-like, romanticized version of African history and identity. Students should be encouraged to examine their identities and the culture and society around them as multiple, shifting, integrated, fluid, in process, and reflective of both positive aspects worth retaining and celebrating and negative aspects in need of alteration, change, and even abandonment. This element of interrogation is an aspect of both the reflexivity and the inclusion of social difference in the study of culture involved in a cultural studies framework. With regard to the hunting society performance, for example, students could be encouraged to reflect on the rigid gender division of roles that sees men portrayed and valorized as the providers of food while women are absent from the entire narrative. Need hunting be an exclusively male role? What would the "hunting performance" look like if it at the very least was expanded to include the present role of women as preparers of food or

better yet in speculative terms as active participants in the hunting expedition and the subsequent hunting performance?

Fourth, African drama as cultural studies must take both the individual and the community into account. This means it should engender increased self-esteem in students, create a space for them to come to voice, and establish and sustain strong links between school and community. By coming to voice I do not mean the individual student's introverted, apolitical speech, nor do I mean the privileging of the very act of speech irrespective of content. Rather, I employ the concept of "coming to voice" as bell hooks (1988b) uses it, that is, to refer to the act of speaking as an act of resistance, an act which develops and expresses critical consciousness and political awareness. In the west there is widespread acknowledgment that a gap exists in a general sense between school culture and community culture. This gap is much greater in the Third World, and in African countries like Sierra Leone it is a veritable chasm. One of the tenets of cultural studies is the expanding of the conception of where education takes place and what is worthy of serious study. With its emphasis on studying the popular and its location in the academy as well as on the streets, and with its emphasis on activist and community work, cultural studies attempts to bridge the gap between educational institutions and the communities that surround them. This is a position that has been advocated by many African cultural leaders (e.g., Cabral, Chinweizu), and it is this dual set of exhortations that in part prompts my emphasis on African drama as cultural studies as more than a traditional, school-bound subject.

Fifth, African drama as cultural studies involves a vision, or, more accurately, a number of visions. In other words, it creates a space for students and teachers to articulate (and dramatize) their visions of a better world in general, and on a personal level, to articulate how they can live their lives better. The current system offers little opportunity for celebrating African cultures, let alone interrogating and critiquing them. But beyond the development of an educational atmosphere in which African cultures can be interrogated, there should be a space for articulations of how things could be made better.

But what exactly would African drama as cultural studies look like? What forms of drama exist in Sierra Leone, and is there a relationship between drama as theater and drama as text? Is there drama education in Sierra Leone, and if so, how is African drama as cultural studies education different and why am I proposing this new form of drama for schools? Should there be an attempt to fit it into the present, rather rigid curricu-

lum, and if so what measures would facilitate this? What purpose and whose interest will it serve? Who will teach it, and perhaps more significantly, how will it be taught? The rest of the chapter is devoted to addressing these and other questions.

In order to propose African drama as cultural studies in a meaningful way, it is perhaps advisable to provide two historical and sociopolitical expositions as background and context. The first is an exposition of Sierra Leonean drama in general, and the relationship between drama and educational institutions in particular. The second is an exposition of Sierra Leonean education in general. Having provided these expositions, I will undertake a critique of the measures taken to address some of the myriad problems in Sierra Leonean education and put forward several general proposals for decolonizing and Africanizing our educational system. Finally, I shall explicate more fully what I am calling African drama as cultural studies and discuss what I consider its benefits, how it will fit into the existing school system, as well as the problems and prospects associated with implementing it.

I am motivated to write the background sections not only by the necessity to inform the reader, but also by a need to engage in the difficult and painful process of interrogating and problematizing the Sierra Leonean educational experience.[12] The sections provide a crucial background for the positions I take and the proposals I make, but simultaneously, they actively contribute to the determination of those positions and the construction of those proposals.

Many acknowledge the need for educational reform in Sierra Leone (see Porter & Younge, 1976; Johnson, 1981; WAEC, 1984), and the changes that have been introduced from time to time (e.g., a stronger emphasis on commercial over academic subjects in some secondary schools) reflect an effort to attune the educational system to serve our purposes and the current needs of the country. This chapter provides, among other things, an opportunity for me to continue to work out and present in a somewhat systematic way my criticisms of the Sierra Leonean educational system, and to put forward my vision of how things could be improved.

Drama and Education in Sierra Leone

This section outlines drama in Sierra Leone and provides a description of the intersection of drama and the theater on the one hand and educational institutions, students, and youths on the other. What I hope to illustrate

here is that there is considerable educational and transformative potential in drama as performance and that in marginalizing this form of drama the educational system is failing to utilize a form which could enhance education significantly. My argument is that because performance and the oral tradition are such pervasive and resilient African cultural forms,[13] we need to take up drama as theater/performance seriously in our educational system and break down the artificial barrier that has been constructed between drama as literature and drama as theater. The result of such an integration would be a more utilitarian, vibrant, cultural studies form of drama.

Dramatic Forms in Sierra Leone

Drama in Sierra Leone could be said to exist in three basic forms: traditional drama, high drama, and "popular theater." Traditional drama refers to such traditional African forms as dramatic storytelling, celebratory dances, and the public performances of secret societies such as Gelede and Soko (exclusively male), Bundu (exclusively female), and hunting societies (mixed). Though their aesthetic value is significant, these performances serve an essentially utilitarian function in the communities. For example, apart from providing entertainment, storytelling serves to dramatize and transmit the history, mythology, traditions, and values of communities. Also, though colorful and entertaining, Egungun performances can also be part of the ritual involved in invoking and communicating with the ancestors. Traditional dramatic forms continue to flourish in both rural and urban areas. Some secret societies originated in Nigeria, and the performances of songs in the original Yoruba and Igbo by hunting societies and the Egungun in particular heightens the mystery associated with such societies since their messages are for the most part unintelligible to the uninitiated. A rise in interest in hunting societies in particular has dramatically increased hunting society performances in the streets of the capital, Freetown, in the last two decades (see Wyse, 1989).

High drama refers to "canonical" plays mainly by international playwrights (from Shakespeare to Soyinka, Shaw to Sophocles). These plays are included in the literature syllabi of educational institutions and on rare occasions are produced by the semi-professional companies and the drama clubs of educational institutions.

Popular theater is used loosely here to refer to locally written plays dealing with contemporary local themes, and written in Krio (the nation's

lingua franca).[14] Virtually all such plays are unpublished and are written for and produced by specific semi-professional companies.

The Intersection of School and Theater: Drama's Golden Decade

From the early 1970s to the mid 1980s the Sierra Leonean public's interest in drama increased phenomenally with the result that school productions became a significant, well-supported extracurricular activity, and semi-professional theater companies flourished and proliferated. A dramatic increase in the involvement of youths in virtually every aspect of the theater was the principal factor responsible for what could be termed the golden decade of drama in Sierra Leone. The organization of inter-secondary school drama competitions in Freetown in the early 1970s initiated the surge in the interest of youths in drama, especially because it created intense rivalries between schools like The Annie Walsh Memorial School, St. Edward's Secondary School, The Methodist Boys' High School, and St. Joseph's Secondary School for Girls, all of which somehow consistently produced talented actors and put on polished productions. These annual competitions sparked many students' interest in acting and the theater in general. Students who did not take part in the productions attended in thousands to watch. Three semi-professional theater companies went talent scouting at the inter- and intra-school competitions and by the late 1970s students were working backstage and appearing (even in leading roles) in the productions of Tabule Experimental Theatre, the African Heritage Workshop, and Songhai Theatre. This development attracted droves of young people as well as adults to the theater as audiences.

Another factor which contributed significantly to the golden decade of drama was the semi-professional companies' shift away from the production of high drama in English to "popular theater" plays in Krio. These latter plays were in a language virtually all Sierra Leoneans could understand. They depicted characters taken from Sierra Leonean society, characters the audience could easily identify with. They also portrayed situations and issues that were familiar, easily understood, and relevant to the lives of a vast majority of Sierra Leoneans. With the introduction of these plays, the theater was no longer exclusively for the elite. To appreciate the plays, patrons no longer needed to be educated, to be fluent in English, let alone to have been to England or to know of western cultures. In short the companies turned away from elitist theater and started to put on more popular theater and the audience, which had previously been

restricted to a few elite patrons, now overflowed with people from all walks of life and included the semi-literate and the illiterate. At last Sierra Leoneans had the makings of a theater of the people, and the people responded enthusiastically.

Ironically, some of the factors that contributed to the growth and success of the theater have led to its steady decline from the mid-1980s to the present. The emergence of completely new theater companies was rare: the proliferation of companies took the form of several members breaking away from one company to form another, and others breaking away from the second company to form a third, while still others broke away from the original group to form a fourth, and so on. This process resulted in more productions than even an enthusiastic theater-going public could support, a dispersion of talent, and a drop in the quality of plays and production standards. This unfortunate situation has only been exacerbated by the dire economic straits in the country, which has meant that despite low ticket costs, few people can now afford to attend the theater.

Intra- and inter-school drama competitions continue to be held but are less popular than they once were. Also, semi-professional companies continue to incorporate talented student actors as guest artists (and sometimes as permanent members), but the public's interest in the theater has waned primarily because of the reasons given above.

Major Influences On/In Sierra Leonean Drama

Sarif Easmon remains Sierra Leone's most renowned playwright as far as "high drama" is concerned. His *Dear Parent and Ogre* and *The New Patriots*, both written in the 1960s, appear regularly as assigned readings in literature syllabi of the West Africa-wide GCE "O" and "A" level programs. The plays of other West African playwrights, especially Wole Soyinka, Ola Rotimi, and Ama Ata Aidoo, are not only included in the literature syllabi of schools and colleges but have contributed through their popularity to the Africanization of the theater in Sierra Leone.

As far as popular theater is concerned, Dele Charley, John Kargbo, Charley Haffner, and Raymond De Suza George are among Sierra Leone's most prominent playwright-directors. Discovered during the late 1970s at an inter-secondary-school competition, Dennis Nelson Streeter is arguably Sierra Leone's most popular actor.

Politically, one of the most important plays to be produced in Sierra Leone was John Kargbo's *Poyoton Wahala*, a satire which exposes a government and political system characterized by violence, corruption, and

nepotism. The banning of this work and subsequent government censorship of the theater stifled the production of more political works and contributed to the mediocrity which has characterized the theater since the mid-1980s.

Locally written plays in Krio are especially popular with theater audiences. However, productions of Sierra Leonean adaptations in Krio of "canonical" plays have been well received, especially by school and university audiences. Such works include Dele Charley's *Wan Paun Flesh* (an adaptation of Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*) and Eustace Palmer's *Ojukokoro* (an adaptation of Ben Jonson's *Volpone*).

Drama in Educational Institutions

For educational institutions in Sierra Leone, drama essentially means canonical plays included as part of the literature curriculum and taught and studied in much the same way as the other two principal genres, prose and poetry. Theater is considered an extracurricular activity, and is at best the domain of individual institutions' dramatic clubs. During what I have chosen to call drama's golden decade these dramatic clubs gained considerable status and members were highly regarded as ambassadors of their institutions. Apart from the drama clubs of certain secondary schools which became famous for accomplished performances, the Fourah Bay College (University of Sierra Leone) Dramatic Society, under the directorship of the then head of the English Department, Eustace Palmer, became particularly successful, touring college campuses and playing to packed audiences in several cities and towns.

Despite the heady successes in the 1970s and early 1980s, theater is still conceived of and treated as an extracurricular activity in educational institutions. Steps have been taken recently, however, to "legitimate" the study of theater in educational institutions. The Freetown Secondary School for Girls is one secondary school which has included drama as a subject (separate from literature) in its program. The Milton Margai Teachers' College has raised the profile of its Department of Drama. Fourah Bay College (FBC) has, since 1987, offered a Certificate in Dramatic Arts program and until the late 1990s, Julius Spencer, who was not only an academic but who also specialized in theater and was once a member of Tabule Experimental Theatre, headed and attracted enthusiastic students to the program. These drama-based reforms emphasize performance; but, with the exception of the FBC initiative, they are not necessarily guided by an African politics that emphasizes the performance

of African works over non-African works, and even in the case of FBC, the study of orature and the idea of performance as performative act are missing.

The Case for Educational Reform in Sierra Leone

Before the introduction of western education, traditional education, which is still practiced to some extent, was provided by parents, members of secret societies, elders, and other members of the community in general. For the most part, boys and girls were educated separately to fulfill mutually exclusive roles. Boys were prepared for their future roles as hunters and trappers or fishermen, warriors, members of the male secret society, leaders of the community, fathers and heads of households. Girls were prepared to be mothers, gardeners and gatherers, spinners and weavers, members of the female secret society, and homemakers. Some roles were shared by both men and women, however. For example, women worked on their husbands' farms (in addition to tending their own gardens), women also fished (using different methods from men), and in some ethnic groups both men and women wielded political power.

Although, for the most part, boys and girls were educated separately, they did learn some things together. For example, the stories and the folklore of the community were handed down to mixed groups of boys and girls around evening fires by the patriarchs and matriarchs of the community. Apart from their entertainment value, these stories educated the children about the culture, values, images, and history of their community.

During the colonial era, the colonizing powers undertook a massive, pervasive, consistent, and insistent attack on the traditional ways, values, and worldviews of African peoples. African cultures were condemned, dismissed, denigrated, or devalued as primitive and heathenistic. At the same time what Ngugi (1986) describes as the cultural bomb (i.e., the languages, values, knowledge, and worldview of the colonizers) was dropped on Africans. Colonial educational systems and institutions constituted one of the principal vehicles in which the cultural bomb was carried and from which it was dropped. Colonial education was purely western in all respects, and it therefore did not acknowledge the existence of (let alone incorporate aspects of) the content and methodologies of traditional African education. If African culture was mentioned at all, it was almost always in negative terms and in an attempt to warn students not to stray back to those "primitive" and "heathenish" ways. But the picture painted

so far is somewhat totalizing. Soyinka, for example, provides an account more reflective of the agency of Africans and the resilience of African culture than Ngugi appears to allow, while Janheinz Jahn (1972) paints a highly romanticized picture in which Africans remain untouched by colonization. Ngugi (1986) acknowledges sites of resistance but basically portrays educated Africans as a group estranged from their roots, tragically de-Africanized, disenfranchized, and broken. As he puts it:

> The effect of the cultural bomb is to annihilate a people's belief in their names, in their languages, in their environment, in their heritage of struggle, in their unity, in their capacities and ultimately in themselves. (p. 3)

Wole Soyinka, on the other hand, portrays educated Africans as people who, with the exception of a small minority (e.g., Lakunle in *The Lion and the Jewel*) were not Europeanized by western education but, rather, use it for their own ends (e.g., to mock the colonizers in *Death and the King's Horseman*). They readily set aside their education and the values associated with it when these conflict with traditional duties (e.g., *The Strong Breed* and *Death and the King's Horseman*). Assessing the effects of the cultural bomb is made even more difficult by the fact that many Africans did not attend schools or have much direct contact with the colonizers. It is probably this group Janheinz Jahn (quoted in Egejuru, 1979) refers to when he declares that

> The problems for the African masses are not those of decolonization, because, let's face it, they have never been colonized. Their spirit has not been colonized, never even been touched... simply because, in keeping with their own value systems, they considered all European ways of doing things wrong. (p. 53)

Although Ngugi's characterization of educated Africans is radically different from and appears to contradict that given by Soyinka and Jahn, I believe that all three portrayals are valid. Ngugi's and Jahn's portrayals should be considered as being at opposite ends of a continuum describing the effects of colonization in general and colonial education in particular on Africans. The issue of the effects of western hegemony in general, and colonization and colonial education, in particular, on Africans is a very complex one; and I believe the effects and Africans' responses varied and continue to vary according to location (i.e., whether one lived in the rural or urban areas), whether one attended school or not, and the level of schooling attained, how traditional one's family was, and so on. I believe that for many Africans the truth of the effects of colonization and their

response to it lies somewhere between the pessimism of Ngugi and the romanticism of Jahn.

Colonial education not only failed to teach Sierra Leoneans about themselves, it actually served to inculcate the culture of the colonizer in them. It actively tried to alienate students intellectually from their African roots and to socialize them into European society, to change their identities by de-Africanizing them and Europeanizing them.[15] Illustrative of this is the fact that the British imparted English to Sierra Leoneans in the belief that their language would be a "civilizing agent" and would impart what Susan Miller (1991) has disparagingly described as a presumptuous notion of "linguistic salvation" for Africans.

However, African students did go home from school, and the traditional African cultures which remained unacknowledged or denigrated in school were preserved, nurtured and transmitted to varying degrees in African communities. African students therefore led a double life as part of their traditional communities, on the one hand, and part of the colonial school community, on the other. As students they had to speak and write the colonizer's language, learn about the colonizer's land and peoples, and even think and act like the colonizer and subscribe to the colonizer's values in order to succeed. On the other hand, they had to live out their lives according to tradition in their communities. African culture had no place in school and the language and culture of schooling had no relevance to their lives in the communities.

Given that colonial education had no relevance to Africans' traditional lives, it is initially puzzling that Sierra Leoneans sent their children to school and even clamored for schools to be opened in areas where there were none. The primary reason for this phenomenon is captured in a single word: "power." Africans could not ignore the real power the colonizers wielded over their lives (even in remote areas) through their alien laws, for example, and their ability to enforce those laws through military might. All Africans had to deal with or at least were affected by the colonizer and so, like the "uneducated," traditionalist village priest Ezulu (in Achebe's *Arrow of God*) who sent his son to school in order to better understand "the white man," Africans in general realized that in order to resist, negotiate with, or, in some cases, collaborate with the colonizer, they had to be able to communicate with and understand the ways of the colonizer.

Africans quickly realized that many advantages came with colonial education. In Sierra Leone, for example, Africans who qualified and practiced as lawyers, doctors, and engineers achieved a relatively high stan-

dard of living, and gained prestige in their communities, and some influence with the colonial administration. Thus education was seen as a means of acquiring personal wealth, prestige, and influence. Colonial education, combined with the means to travel to England, encouraged some of these professionals to declare themselves to be Black British.

Many of the Sierra Leoneans who considered themselves "Black British" were Krios. In fact in colonial times the Krios (a fusion of groups as disparate as poor Blacks from England, Maroons from Jamaica, Black loyalists from Nova Scotia, and continental Africans liberated from illegal slave ships) epitomized African ambivalence to colonization. On the one hand, some rejected inherited British names and took on African names (e.g., Lamina Sankoh) and were at the forefront of the fight to Africanize and decolonize Sierra Leone and other British colonies (see Wyse, 1989). By asserting their autonomy and their intimate acquaintance with both the positive and negative aspects of western civilization, such Krios provoked the ire of early colonial officials and this culminated in a period of Krio baiting (see Walker, 1992). On the other hand, other Krios were proud of their western-influenced cultural identity and actively contributed to the establishment and maintenance of British colonies and "protectorates" not only in Sierra Leone but indeed all over West Africa. In characterizing the Krio dispersal and their role as clerks, missionaries, and secretaries in other parts of West Africa, Wyse (1982) points out that Krios were fulfilling the hopes of Granville Sharpe to be "bearers of civilization," to be "cultural frontiersmen..." (p. 321).

Although educated Sierra Leoneans were discriminated against and always given lower positions and paid considerably less than their English counterparts, their opinions were taken much more seriously by the colonial administration than those of uneducated Sierra Leoneans. It was educated and eloquent Sierra Leoneans like Wallace Johnson and Milton Margai who spearheaded the movement for independence. Sierra Leone gained independence in 1961 not through violence or revolution but after diplomatic negotiations in which the colony was represented by a number of eloquent African lawyers and academics. In his reference to "the brazen law which forbids the oppressed man to possess any arms except those he himself has stolen from the oppressor," Sartre (1949b/1988b) captures both the power wielded by the colonizer and the colonized African's ingenuity in making the colonizer's language her/his own, and eventually using it as a weapon against the oppressor. Educated Sierra Leoneans demonstrated this ingenuity in using colonial education to gain independence for the country.

It is understandable, therefore, that Sierra Leoneans developed an enduring healthy respect, even reverence, for education.[16] In postcolonial Sierra Leone, western education is still viewed as the means through which one acquires wealth, prestige, and to a lesser extent, political power. The simple correlation which was constructed in the colonial era between the level of one's education and one's worth has been maintained. Thus education was and to a large extent still is viewed as being inherently good and empowering. This perception of education is, I believe, largely responsible for the fact that even in republican Sierra Leone, education is still modeled to a large extent in content, language, context, and pedagogy after the inherited colonial, western model.

This is not to say that changes have not been made to the received model. As far as content is concerned, for example, geography students now study Sierra Leone and West Africa for the GCE "O" level examinations (but North America is also on the curriculum). Achebe, Soyinka, and Ngugi are now staples of "A" level literature (but Donne, Dickens, and Defoe are still staples too, and Shakespeare remains enthroned as the most significant author in both the "O" and "A" level literature syllabi).

Basically, therefore, the content of Sierra Leonean education has not been Africanized to any significant degree. Rather, the inherited focus on and dominance of western content has been kept, while African elements have been gradually introduced. Colonial education said, "You have no knowledge that is of worth. Learn about and learn to be like your colonial masters and you will be better off." Contemporary Sierra Leonean education says, "Learn about the west and how to be like westerners for that is the knowledge that is of most worth. And learn a bit about yourself while you are at it; it can't hurt."

With regard to language, as I have noted, it is an interesting fact that the average educated Sierra Leonean is fluent in three languages; her/his mother tongue, Krio, and English. Yet all schooling is still conducted in English, so the Sierra Leonean student's progress in school is dependent on her or his mastery of this foreign language.[17] Sierra Leoneans do not acknowledge, let alone utilize and celebrate, their multilingualism in school. In fact African languages are considered only as a hindrance to acquiring fluency and literacy in English. Students in Sierra Leone still endure punishment similar to that described by Ngugi (1986) for speaking their mother tongue in school.

Because it is still based largely on the received western model, education in Sierra Leone still excludes the lived experiences, the culture, and the language of the very people it is meant to serve and the very cultures

and society into which it is supposed to socialize them. The following characterization of education in former colonies by Obah (1983) captures the irony of education and the plight of students in Sierra Leone and indeed many African countries:

> It is a legacy of colonialism that education in former territories is, to some extent, an alienating experience. The bulk of the material for study refers to things outside the students' environments. Students read at second remove, unable to make much use of the vast experience that they bring to reading. (p. 130)

There are two basic, interrelated, problematic factors at work in the Sierra Leonean educational system. The first involves the historical and contemporary global hegemony of western knowledge and culture. The west has constructed and is perpetrating, and Sierra Leoneans have internalized and are perpetuating what Giroux (1991c) in defining modernism describes as "a notion of geographical and cultural territoriality [that] is constructed by a hierarchy of domination and subordination marked by a center and margin legitimated through the civilizing knowledge/power of a privileged Eurocentric culture" (p. 8). The acceptance of the hegemony of western knowledge as being the sort of knowledge that is valid and therefore worth acquiring is therefore the first basic problem. In fact I would go as far as to say that "western knowledge" is still synonymous with "education" for Sierra Leoneans. The second problem is a reluctance to interrogate the relevance of the education Sierra Leoneans are receiving to their actual lived experience and the country's (indeed the continent's) needs. Even when the irrelevance of education to students' lives has been acknowledged, there has been a reluctance to make sweeping and revolutionary change in the educational system, as evidenced in the examples I have given. Sierra Leoneans seem to have accepted the irrelevance of their education to their lived experience, the valorization of western culture at the expense of African culture, and the alienation of the educated Sierra Leonean from her/his roots as the price to be paid for becoming educated.

Educated Sierra Leoneans still look outside of their communities and their cultures for acceptance and validation as learned people. In other words, we have internalized the designations assigned to us by our colonial legacy and even our present education as being people at the margins. Like our colonial counterparts, we as contemporary Sierra Leoneans believe that in order to be considered educated, we must know what those at the center know, we must be like those at the center, we must move

toward the center and leave the margins behind. Because of the real power the center wields in terms of its dominance of what constitutes valid knowledge and the economic benefits and prestige it can still bestow on those it deigns to recognize as being learned and therefore acceptable, Sierra Leoneans have their eyes on the center even as they learn at the margins. This attitude is reflected in the exchange in the following extract from an interview I had with an "A" level literature student in Freetown.[18]

> WRI: What do you think literature is good for? You've said it's not directly relevant to the career you want to pursue, but in general, what do you think somebody can do with a qualification in literature?
>
> SUR: Well, so many things. You can be easily accepted into English colleges when you have English literature. Say you are not yet at university level, you go to England and try to enter university there. If you've got an A or a B in literature, that's great. You are accepted. At first I wanted to become a writer, a librarian, or to do mass communications—or law. Literature could be good for all those things because you learn to speak good English. Anyone who does literature gets to speak the English language very well. (Wright, 1993a, p. 40)

Fanon (1967) has declared that "mastery of language affords remarkable power" (p. 18), and it is evident from that "Surpetta," the student quoted above, is aware of the hegemonic dominance of English, the prestige and academic and material benefits tied into becoming proficient in this foreign language. Consequently, even as she does her "A" levels in Sierra Leone (the margins), her sight is set on universities in England (the center). Like every other Sierra Leonean student, she realizes that qualifications earned in England are regarded, both in England and in Sierra Leone, as being more prestigious than those earned at the University of Sierra Leone. Also, she realizes that no matter what career she chooses, her ability to secure a job, in fact her future economic survival and well-being, are tied into the extent of her mastery of English. My intention here is not to criticize this student as an individual but rather to point out that this search for validation from the center is promoted by the educational system in Sierra Leone. As a Sierra Leonean who has done all his graduate studies in Canada, and who currently teaches at an American university, I am equally complicit in this phenomenon.

The conclusion I am forced to draw from all this is that despite three decades of independence, education in contemporary Sierra Leone is still colonized. It is evident that two of the principal factors which have shaped our current educational system are the colonial educational system and the continued hegemonic dominance of western knowledge and educa-

tional practices. The inherited colonial educational system has been preserved in Sierra Leone, and contemporary education consists essentially of this received model with a few modifications made in an attempt to modernize and nationalize it.

I believe that because it is based on the colonial, western model, efforts to modify the existing educational system, to make it more relevant to students' lives, to make it "more African" or "more Sierra Leonean," are doomed to failure. The received model was designed to impart western knowledge to the exclusion of African knowledge, to socialize Africans into western society and alienate us from our own traditional societies, to de-Africanize us and to Europeanize us. Such a model cannot be modified for our purposes.

It is usually assumed that measures to introduce African and Sierra Leonean elements into the educational system are positive, progressive, and unproblematic. However, because they are not far-ranging enough, and because the received model is still kept as a core, such measures end up being insidiously counterproductive and retrogressive. For example, including Soyinka in the "A" level literature curriculum would appear to be a progressive move. However, because the curriculum is still based on the received western canon of ~~literature~~,[19] there are still more foreign than African texts on the reading list, and Shakespeare is still enthroned as the most significant author. Students are therefore still given several strong retrogressive messages; first, that the western canon constitutes what is to be considered literature, and African literature can only be added to this body of literature; second, that there is a hierarchy of ~~literature~~ and that Shakespeare (a western writer) is somehow superior to, at a higher level than Soyinka (an African writer), third, that their emphasis should be on acquiring knowledge of western ~~literature~~, and by extension, western societies' histories and cultures rather than African ones. Thus, while including Soyinka in the curriculum is a positive step in that it introduces an African element, it also leaves intact too many of the negative factors that characterize the curriculum, and as such its positive effects are undermined, even swamped, by these negative factors. In the end we only delude ourselves in thinking that steps like including African elements can bring about the modernization and nationalization of our educational system.

What is needed is not the tentative and in the end futile attempts that have been made to change the system but radical, sweeping changes, the sort of changes that will decolonize, nationalize, and Africanize education in Sierra Leone, and create a new, vibrant, and relevant educational sys-

tem. Personally, I believe it should be a system based on a vision of a unified, democratic, just, and compassionate Africa.

First, this would be an educational system which situates Sierra Leone and Africa at its core and only then looks outward. In other words it would be a system which reflects, and manifests a rejection of our designation (which we have internalized and continue to perpetuate) as being on the margins. In my opinion the determination of centrality and marginality is not or should not be determined solely on the basis of power but also on the basis of location. Given our location in Africa and our identities as Africans, it is time we began to perceive Africa, our cultures, our location, as central. Prominent continental and diasporic African educators and critics like Ngugi (1993) and hooks (1984) as well as South Asian critics like Spivak (1990) have expressed an urgent need for marginalized peoples to move their discourses from margin to center. As so-called marginalized peoples, we must take Spivak's (1990) advice and seize the center.[20] I do not mean this as a merely rhetorical gesture. Rather, I mean that we must not only begin to perceive our cultures, our location, as central, but must also work toward making this perspective manifest in a concrete way, including making it an integral part of our educational system. It is only when this new perspective, this situating of ourselves at the center, becomes manifest that we can begin to create the alliances between African nations and peoples necessary to further an African project of possibility.

Second, the educational system should promote nationalism. By this I do not mean a narrow concept of nationalism restricted to the borders of the country carved out by the imperialists. Rather, I am referring to a balance between creating precisely that kind of nationalism (of which we as Sierra Leoneans do not have much) and a transnational African nationalism (of which we have even less). By transnational African nationalism, I mean learning about and creating social, cultural, political, and economic links with other African nations and communities, taking pride in being African, and contributing to the development of a better African society. If a nationalism restricted to the confines of national borders constitutes an imagined community, then a transnational nationalism involved in my second definition is all the more imagined and difficult to realize. However, given the problematics of territorial nationalism today (ethnic cleansing, border disputes, attacks on multiculturalism), a transnational African nationalism is all the more attractive and even essential for the survival and transformation of African identities. Neither Sierra Leonean nor transnational African nationalism should be promoted in such a way as to make it difficult for students to learn about other places, peoples, and

cultures, or close down the conversation between us as Africans and the rest of the world. Communication with other communities and societies outside Africa, and exposure to and incorporation of aspects of their educational systems, is absolutely essential if Sierra Leoneans are not to develop the narrow Afrocentrism which could lead to a version of the institutionalized bigotry fostered in the west by narrow Eurocentrism. It is crucial to introduce and to stress African content and conceptions, and so on, but this should be accomplished through a politics that establishes Africa as a center on the basis of location rather than on the basis of alleged intellectual, moral, sociocultural, and spiritual superiority. In other words, differences can and should be presented but never on the basis of hierachical positioning.

Third, it would be an educational system that is critical. By this I mean it would not simply celebrate and reflect traditional Sierra Leonean and African cultures, but would also critically interrogate them. Also it would elicit from students their views of how they think their culture and identity is actively being constructed both by themselves and by the sociopolitical and cultural developments around them.

In light of our history as colonized, exploited, oppressed, and for some groups, like the Krios, displaced peoples, the possibility of an essential African subjectivity, an Africa-wide *recueillement*, is particularly seductive. The promise of the strength that could come with unity, the justifiable distrust of others that makes us want to cling to one another against the world, and the nostalgic aching to recapture our traditional ways are sometimes overwhelming. They foster a position from which essentialism appears justified and even urgently necessary, one from which deconstruction appears counterproductive (perhaps another ploy to keep us divided and our energies dissipated). Corrigan (1986/1990) points to this position when he asks "why should any denied group de-construct when the powers that be go on going on (smugly or uncomfortably, it matters not)." Marley, in his song, "Rebel's hop," reflects this position in the following refrain:

> We refuse to be what they wanted us to be,
> We are what we are,
> And that's the way it's going to be.

Marley's refrain takes the sort of simple, militant stand against the oppressor and suggests an empowering, essential African identity that is virtually irresistible to the African who is politically conscious.

There are two basic problems with this position, however. First, the idea of a fixed, essential African identity, impermeable to the influences of others, suggested in Marley's refrain, is illusionary and unattainable. Culture is always fluid, subject to change and susceptible to outside influence, and the individual's identity is never unitary but a collection of multiple subjectivities. Second, in order to ensure that all Africans enjoy the sort of unity and democracy I am advocating, it is absolutely essential that we critically examine our cultures on an ongoing basis to ensure that certain individuals and groups are not discriminated against and/or marginalized because of who they are, and how they choose to live their lives. Hegemony and its contingent problems exist not only on a global scale but also within African societies. The same problems which Africans encounter on a global basis (such as marginalization, exploitation, and discrimination, etc.) are manifest in traditional cultures, and romanticizing and treating our cultures as being above and beyond change in an effort to be "truly African" will only perpetuate existing injustices.

In the effort to create a better society, therefore, we cannot afford to fall into the trap of simply recapturing, implementing, and celebrating traditional values and customs. Such essentialization would be counterproductive since it would perpetuate the exclusion and/or subjugation of minority ethnic groups, entrench certain traditional sexist practices, subjugate the individual's will and desire under a willfully misconstrued and distorted appropriation of the widespread traditional African emphasis on community,[21] and promote narrow tribalism with its inherent problems of exclusion, divisiveness, and bigotry.

What is required, then, is an educational system which engages simultaneously in construction and deconstruction. This might appear to be impossible at first consideration, but it is a viable process and it is exactly the process that needs to be undertaken. There is an urgent need to educate our students in such a way as to foster their African identities. There is, at the same time, a need to ensure that the injustices in traditional cultures be addressed through education.

Fourth, it should be a system which engages both the larger African project and the projects of individual students, teachers, administrators, and so on, (whether the latter conform to, dissent from, or are simply different from the African project). In other words it should make space within an African project of possibility for individual projects of possibility. Like Wittig (quoted in De Lauretis, 1988), who argues for both a class consciousness and an individual subjectivity, I am arguing for an educational system that makes space for the simultaneous development of an African consciousness and identity, and an individual subjectivity.

Contextualizing African Drama as Cultural Studies

It is not by coincidence that the basic characteristics of the new educational system I maintain Sierra Leone desperately needs are much the same as the characteristics of what I am calling African drama as cultural studies education. This is because I have conceived of and am developing the concept of African drama as cultural studies to match the characteristics and meet the goals of the new educational system I feel is necessary for Sierra Leone to contribute to the evolution of a just, democratic, and compassionate African society. African drama as cultural studies education is intended, therefore, to contribute to the African project of possibility.

Situating African Drama as Cultural Studies in the Secondary School Curriculum

Major changes in virtually every aspect of contemporary Sierra Leonean education are implicated in creating African drama as cultural studies and introducing it into the educational system. One of the most significant of these would be a rejection of the existing rigid division between drama as literature (respected, included in the curriculum) and drama as performance (not highly regarded, excluded from the curriculum, considered as an extracurricular diversion for students).

Drama exists in traditional African culture as functional, performance-oriented forms. The concept of drama as literature is a European development, one which undermines the original European (i.e., Greek) and the original and contemporary African conception of drama. In general, plays are best appreciated through performance rather than reading. As Soyinka (1976) asserts,

> It is necessary always to look for the essence of the play among the... roofs and spaces [of the theatre] not to confine it to the printed text as an autonomous entity. For this reason, deductions from plays which have had the benefit of actual production are more instructive.... (p. 44)

Because performance and orature are such important aspects of the meaning-making of plays, they should become integral elements (of equal if not greater importance than literature) of what is considered African literature, and African drama as cultural studies should therefore be situated as a core aspect of literature studies in Sierra Leone in particular and Africa in general. To facilitate the concretization of this reconception of literature, I propose that drama as theater be made part of the formal curricu-

lum of educational institutions. In the initial stages it could be introduced as a subject that complements literature studies.[22]

Initially, I had conceived of African drama as cultural studies being integrated into the existing literature curriculum. However, one of the principal findings of the WAEC study of students' poor performance in "A" level literature was that the "A" level curriculum was too demanding, the reading list so extensive that it was often difficult to complete the curriculum in time for the examination. Given this reality, it would be impractical to simply add another major facet to this already demanding curriculum. Also, I believe African drama as cultural studies would be more than comprehensive enough to be treated initially as a separate subject. Further, its potential as a vehicle for the celebration and interrogation of culture and individual empowerment would be restricted and curtailed if African drama as cultural studies were introduced simply as an aspect of literature studies. In my view, given the realities of literature studies in Africa, it would be best to introduce this reconceived notion of African literature, which situates orature in general and African drama as cultural studies in particular at its core, through a gradual process, beginning with the introduction of African drama as cultural studies as a separate subject.

Reconceptualizing Drama and/in Literature Studies

My proposal that African drama as cultural studies be established initially as a separate subject does not imply, however, that the status quo of literature studies should be maintained. In fact, the establishment of African drama as cultural studies should be undertaken simultaneously with the implementation of the following changes in the drama aspect of literature. First, the number of plays from the inherited canon in our syllabi should be reduced drastically, and replaced by plays from the African canon as well as the works of local dramatists working in the theater (whose works invariably remain unpublished). Apart from furthering the African project of possibility, this change would make literature more interesting, meaningful, and comfortable for the students. One of the findings of my study (Wright, 1993a) was that Sierra Leonean students preferred reading culturally familiar texts. Further, as Obah (1983) has asserted, ethnic literature has the power to revive dormant imaginations and encourage positive reading habits "through its quality of being...reassuring, familiar, unthreatening" (p. 50). In essence, I am proposing that African works form the core of our literature syllabi, that the gulf between

popular theater and high drama be bridged, and that local popular theater plays be legitimated as a form of drama to be studied in educational institutions.

Second, drama should be approached differently. As I have argued, plays are meant to be staged, yet Sierra Leonean students hardly ever get to see, let alone take part in, productions of the plays they study. Though dramatization has many benefits, Sierra Leonean schools still teach drama in such a way as to reflect the inherited concept of drama as literature to be simply read. I propose that schools produce plays on their syllabi on a school-wide and/or class-by-class basis.

These changes would not only foster but necessitate a strong link between African drama as cultural studies and literature classes. The African drama as cultural studies classes would be a logical vehicle for staging the productions for the literature classes and the rest of the school. In fact, because most of the students in the drama courses would also be in the literature courses, the link will afford students a rich opportunity to explore their literature texts not merely as literature but also in production. This strong link between the two subjects would gradually lead to a blending of the two into the new African literature studies.

As far as language is concerned, productions, and even classes, would be held in both English and the vernacular languages (especially the lingua franca, Krio). Thus, African drama as cultural studies would create a space for introducing and legitimating African languages in the school system. One of the benefits of this move is that it would contribute to the standardization of our languages. A second is that it would encourage students to learn and become literate in local languages other than their own mother tongue. Third, it would enable students to take pride in their linguistic heritage and counter the numerous negative messages about indigenous languages (e.g., that they are inferior, unworthy of serious study, have no place in the culture of schooling, and cannot be utilized for formal communication) that students are constantly being bombarded with through the current exclusive use of English in the Sierra Leonean educational system.

African drama as cultural studies should not be restricted to the school. It should involve the students learning from and collaborating with people in the community through projects, performances, and theatrical productions involving local drummers, storytellers, praise singers, and griots. Also, classes, rehearsals, and productions should be held not only at school but also in the community. In fact, doing African drama as cultural studies could involve what Simon et al. (1991) describe as "reflec-

tive learning," that is, moving back and forth between theoretical sessions in class and community-based, practical, learning and production experiences. Thus, both in terms of audience and in terms of cast and production, African drama as cultural studies would involve strong links between school and community. Drama as cultural studies would therefore reflect the notion that cultural studies happens not only in formal educational settings but also in the community. Equally important, through this link, the gulf between school and community would be bridged. Students would learn traditional dramatic forms directly from members of the community and the community in turn would have access to schools and be able to understand better what transpires within their erstwhile hallowed halls.

In order to be critical and to foster students' individual subjectivities, African drama as cultural studies should involve, even begin with, students' experience. As Simon et al. (1991) have pointed out, students come to educational institutions already knowing. To push this idea further, they then acquire the knowledge and values of school once they are in school. To correct the ironic reality of the lack of connection between school and home knowledge, African drama as cultural studies classes, rehearsals and productions must create spaces where students can bring their experience to bear. However, this is not to suggest that students' experiences should simply be celebrated and valorized. Rather, they must be open to interrogation also. Simon et al.'s (1991) concepts of "working on" and "working with" experience provide a viable method through which this balanced treatment of students' knowledge and experience could be engaged.

Working on experience would involve helping students to understand their own knowledge and experience of school and those of others, not as given or unchangeable but as provisional and contingent. School is a socially and historically defined space, and working on knowledge would be aimed at helping students come to this realization. It would help students understand that their knowledge of school and the school values they possess and reproduce are historically and socially generated and are therefore not to be taken for granted but interrogated and altered if necessary.

Working with experience would involve helping students reach beyond their own knowledge and experience to become exposed to, become acquainted with, and begin to understand and become sensitive to the experience of others, especially those different from themselves. It would involve helping students to understand "how their experiences are linked to those of others situated differently by virtue of their social class,

gender, [ethnic group], race, age, geographical, and historical location" (Simon et al., 1991, p. 29).

Some student experiences (and the agreements, complicity in oppression, and contradictions they reveal and produce) could be used as material for drama presentations (with the permission of the students). However, when such experiences involve particularly sensitive and/or personal issues, teachers should avoid using them, unless of course it is the unsolicited, expressed wish of the student/s involved to use them.

The Pedagogy of African Drama as Cultural Studies

Teachers cannot approach African drama as cultural studies with the tired and counterproductive method of teaching which Freire (1968, 1983) calls the banking method. Students are not, and should not be treated as empty vessels into which the teacher deposits knowledge and from which s/he asks for withdrawals at examination time. Furthermore, teachers are not to be seen as all-knowing. Rather, teachers must be willing to explore and learn together with students. In short, African drama as cultural studies demands that teachers and students generate theatrical productions in particular and knowledge in general together. Conversely, this does not mean that the teacher becomes merely a passive co-learner. Delpit (1988) has pointed out that "For many [teachers] who consider themselves members of liberal or radical camps, acknowledging personal power and admitting participation in the culture of power is distinctly uncomfortable" (p. 87). As Delpit points out, the desire to be simply a co-learner can lead some teachers to avoid teaching. Contrary to the position of those who would deny the knowledge and more significantly, the real power teachers have in the classroom, I propose that the teaching of African drama as cultural studies involve acknowledging their expertise, imparting their knowledge in a way that, as Freire (in Shor, 1987b) recommends, is authoritative without being authoritarian, and using their discretion to intervene or at least challenge students when they come up with sexist, racist, or tribalist answers to problematic situations. The notion of empowering students should not come at the expense of teachers' denial of their ethical and pedagogical responsibilities in the classroom. The danger to be guarded against, on the other hand, is the imposition of the teacher's perspectives and personal project on students since this could lead to what I would call "righteous oppression" of students; a type of oppression which, despite its perceived progressiveness, ends up alienating students or making them endorse the teacher's position simply to pass

their examinations, without really challenging them to think critically. The teacher who undertakes the job of teaching the critical pedagogy involved in African drama as cultural studies education must be flexible, sensitive, perceptive, altruistic, and patient. Such a teacher must be able to be both a co-learner and a teacher in the classroom.

As far as texts are concerned, they should include "texts" generated by the students, traditional performance pieces, the plays of local dramatists, and canonical plays (from both the African and foreign canons). The majority should be texts generated by the students, drawing on the issues, the problems that are of concern to them. This, combined with the fact that many of the productions would be in the local languages, based on issues and problems confronting the local community and the school, and put on in the community for free or at readily affordable prices, all point to the fact that African drama as cultural studies would be modeled largely after popular theater. In fact it should aspire to be a form of popular theater; to fit the cryptic, umbrella description Eskamp gives of popular theater, namely "theatre in search of social change." This characteristic of being overtly politicized is also supposed to be characteristic of cultural studies forms and approaches. However, as O'Connor (1989) and Grossberg (1989b) among others have pointed out, the overt link with leftist politics that existed in early cultural studies in Britain has been replaced in the United States with a depoliticized version of postmodernism. Modeling African drama as cultural studies to some extent after theater in search of social change could be one way to ensure African cultural studies establishes and retains a progressive political edge.

Implementing African Drama as Cultural Studies: Problems and Prospects

In dealing with the problems and prospects involved in implementing African drama as cultural studies, I would like to touch first on how its characteristics would influence the way the innovation is likely to be received by the government (the ultimate gatekeeper of educational innovation), second, on the problems associated with fitting it into the existing rigid, examination-driven system, and third, on the problems that may arise from implementing it in the classroom.

The role of theater (especially popular theater) as an agent for social and political comment, consciousness-raising, activism, and celebration and interrogation of traditional cultures is well documented (e.g., by Kidd, 1979, 1980; and Eskamp, 1989). As I pointed out in my introduc-

tory anecdote, the Sierra Leonean government's extreme reaction to the production of the satire *Poyoton Wahala* served to indicate both the potency of popular theater as an agent of social change and the danger of utilizing it as such. As the play was performed night after night to packed audiences, people started to repeat the jokes in school, to assert the truth of the portrayal of corruption on the streets, and to speak out in their places of work about how fed up they were with the government. The government considered the situation serious enough to ban *Poyoton Wahala*. The extremity of the government's response convinced me of the potential of the theater for consciousness-raising, and of the ever present danger of government censorship.

Because African drama as cultural studies would essentially be a form of popular theater, it would in all probability engender vigorous interrogation of the sociopolitical status quo. In other words it could prove to be a crucial avenue through which historical and contemporary social justice issues could be explored and democracy promoted. Conversely, however, this very prospect would probably make it unattractive to the government and to conservative educational gatekeepers. Government censorship might well be the least of the problems that both students and staff might have to face if this aspect of African drama as cultural studies were emphasized. From Ngugi in Kenya to Soyinka in Nigeria, from Kavanagh in South Africa to John Kargbo in Sierra Leone, prominent African dramatists have had to face harassment, censorship, imprisonment, and exile for the content of their work. Kavanagh (1985) provides this wry, laconic, yet chilling description of the persecution he and other dramatists endured at the hands of South African police: "Our kind of theatre and the police somehow just kept bumping into each other, sometimes on the verge of tragedy, at other times crude comedy....I survived and most of my comrades survived. Not all" (pp. xi-xii).

However, as Maja-Pearce (1991) explains, the phenomenon of governmental harassment and censorship has affected not only prominent writers but also journalists, students, taxi drivers, and businesswomen. The proclivity to censor is characteristic of both civilian and military regimes in Africa. One obvious root cause is the desire to stay in power and the need to preempt the politicization of the population and the perceived threat that this poses to the government's hold on power. Even though popular theater has this characteristic, however, it continues to flourish in many African countries. I believe this is because it is possible to de-emphasize or make more subtle criticisms of the government, and emphasize other aspects of the genre. The popularity of Freetong Players

and the relative freedom with which they expressed social criticism in Sierra Leone from the late 1980s to the late 1990s testifies to this. Thus, it would probably be most expedient for promoters and practitioners of African drama as cultural studies to follow this example and concentrate more on the less controversial aspects such as its characteristics of being relatively inexpensive, reflective of African values and perspectives, and a means of creating links between school and community.

In these dire economic times, Sierra Leoneans could develop approaches to education which are not only more Afrocentric but also considerably less expensive. I point to this aspect of African drama as cultural studies (Wright, 1993a) as an example of the kind of creative measures that need to be taken to reduce the costs of education in Africa without sacrificing quality. I believe that as a relatively inexpensive form of drama which is also more reflective of traditional African values and worldviews, African drama as cultural studies would be extremely attractive both to the government and to parents and the public at large. In a country plagued by high illiteracy rates, other benefits, such as the contribution that African drama as cultural studies could make to the promotion and standardization of written forms of local languages and the development of literature/orature in both English and local languages, could only enhance its attractiveness in the eyes of the government, educators, and the public at large.

Another factor that needs to be taken into account is the fact that the educational system in Sierra Leone is rigid and examination-driven. By this I mean that teachers do not have much leeway in deciding on curriculum texts. Rather, curriculum content for all examination levels is dictated by the West African Examinations Council which imposes a curriculum from which (at the Selective Entrance level and the GCE "O" and "A" levels) schools can make only very limited choices (see Johnson, 1981; WAEC, 1989). Also, even for non-examination level classes, the curriculum content is decided by the school rather than left to the discretion of the individual teacher.

It is difficult to imagine African drama as cultural studies existing let alone flourishing under such a system. It should be noted, however, that one of the most persuasive arguments for the existing system is the high cost of textbooks and other school materials. In a system in which children can hand down books to younger siblings, and students in different schools can share the same textbooks, costs can be kept low. Since African drama as cultural studies would cost little in terms of imported texts, it would be possible to have much more variety and flexibility in curriculum

material while keeping costs low. Also, if African drama as cultural studies is introduced, the benefits of non-examination-driven courses (which some teachers would welcome but are powerless to introduce) would become self-evident. The problem would be at the gate keeping stage where traditional and conservative government and school officials would have to be persuaded that African drama as cultural studies does not merely provide an opportunity for students to play.

Because African drama as cultural studies would involve revolutionary changes in established, deep rooted assumptions, conceptions, and practices, both in the discourse of schooling and in traditional and modern cultures, it can be expected that it will generate resistance not only from some students but also from some parents, educators, and members of the general public. To lessen such resistance and to accord certain institutions the respect they deserve, African drama as cultural studies must be approached with a sensitivity to cultures and people's stake in them. For example, while certain songs of the hunting societies can be and have been used in theater performances, it would be highly inadvisable and inappropriate to use Egungun songs and ritual dancing in theatrical performances since they involve steps taken to evoke and invoke the dead. Thus, knowledge of traditional forms and sensitivity to what they mean to people are essential in making decisions about material for African drama as cultural studies.

Also, educators must be particularly sensitive to the fact that doing African drama as cultural studies could be emotionally wrenching for those involved since it involves shaking the very cultural foundations which have guided people's lives. There is a Krio saying: "Nor pull braid knar me mot if you nor get biscuit for put dae."[23] In other words, out of an interrogation (and in some cases rejection) of established ways of being there must arise better ways of being. Deconstruction must be accomplished with sensitivity and must be accompanied by construction. Overzealous and insensitive onslaughts on traditional culture or on the contemporary discourse of schooling will only elicit entrenched resistance or token, superficial compliance from students.

What I hope I have indicated here is that African drama as cultural studies could be developed as a viable and quite utilitarian genre of African cultural studies. Furthermore, it could be a means of making the educational system more reflective of the concerns and cultures of African communities. It should be emphasized, however, that African drama as cultural studies will not succeed in isolation. Many of the sweeping changes I advocate in this chapter need to be made in the educational sys-

tem in general for it to flourish and be effective. Ironically, its greatest chance of being established and becoming a watershed for introducing cultural studies into the school system probably lies in the fact that administrators, parents, educators, and the public at large tend to look upon drama (as theater/performance) as being marginal and will undoubtedly be more willing to allow experimentation with form and pedagogy in this area than with core or "serious" subjects. From such inauspicious beginnings, African drama as cultural studies could well become the catalyst that engenders radical and comprehensive educational reform in Sierra Leone.

Chapter Four

What's Lit Gotta Do With It? The (Potential) Contribution of Literature as Cultural Studies to African Development

"Africa is like a *tabula rasa* on which everyone feels free to write whatever the hell they like." (Molara Ogundipe-Leslie)

The Learned Societies of Canada Conference (renamed the Congress of the Social Sciences and Humanities in the late 1990s) is actually several conferences held consecutively, and in some cases, overlapping one another. As someone who works in and is interested in various disciplines, I have found it an ideal series of conferences to attend and at which to present my work. The first time I attended and presented at the "Learneds" was in 1991. At the time I belonged only to the Canadian Society for the Study of Education (CSSE) and limited myself to attending sessions of this particular society. For the 1992 conference, however, I was involved in formulating a session on what we called "going beyond postcolonialism" with a group from the Sociology of Education Department at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. The proposed session was not only accepted by the Canadian Sociology and Anthropology Association (CSAA) but was cross-listed by the Canadian Association for the Study of International Development (CASID).

The Learneds was held in summer and as we flew over rural Prince Edward Island (PEI), I noticed large tracts of exposed soil, very red soil. This sight was very moving for me as it reminded me of the laterite soil of some areas in tropical Africa. As illogical as the association was and as unlikely as my subsequent expectation was, I somehow immediately felt I should feel at home in a place where the soil was as red as it was in Sierra Leone. I was rather disappointed that PEI was in fact particularly white in population. The only Black person I met who lived there was a student from Ghana, and he explained that he spent as much time as he possibly could in Halifax, Nova Scotia; "just to see some black faces," as he put it.

At the conference, which was held in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, our session was to be attended by members of both CSAA and

CASID. I still knew little about CASID, the work undertaken and presented under its umbrella, or what to expect from its members in terms of their participation at our session. I asked George Dei, a professor of sociology of education at OISE, who was both part of our group and a member of CASID, about the association. His view was that CASID members ran the political spectrum from quite progressive leftists to reactionary right-wing academics and invited me to attend some sessions to see and judge for myself. I chose to attend a session on development in Africa. When I entered the room, the first speaker was making his opening remarks and the first thing that struck me was that there were no Black people, let alone continental Africans, at the table: all the panelists were white Canadian males, as was the discussant. I looked around and in the audience there were several Africans dressed in traditional dress as well as others in western clothing. I wondered whether these other Africans felt, as I did, that it was not merely ironic but quite unacceptable that while there were obviously many Africans working in the area of development in Canada, no Africans were participating in the only panel discussing African development.

Listening to the first two papers, I noticed that the tone of the discourse was at the very least prescriptive if not paternalistic: Africa was consistently described as being in crisis or in the throes of a number of crises; the presenters elaborated on the inability of African governments and African peoples to deal with these various crises and ended by offering solutions they had formulated or were advocating. These presentations reminded me of the importance of perspective. It was obvious that the speakers "knew Africa" in the sense that they had accumulated or had access to a collection of facts and data about the continent and its peoples. However, it was also obvious that they did not "know" Africa, in the sense that they were not willing or able to take the perspectives and worldviews of African peoples or such factors as the resilience of local peoples and the existence of counter-discourses into account in their work. The situation brought to mind Ama Ata Aidoo's (1990) statement about African criticism:

> African criticism is like meat out there in the market place, with everybody dragging at it, including people who do not care for Africans or what they are writing. But they see that it is a way of making a name for themselves as critics of African literature. (p. 13)

Like Aidoo I wondered about the motives and degree of concern that produced scholarship of the kind I was encountering. While the presen-

ters were clearly "experts" on Africa, they seemed to care little for Africa and Africans.

I was uncomfortable with the general tone and direction of the presentations, but all of this was little preparation for the third speaker's paper. He presented on the "lack of development" in Eastern Africa, pointing to the adherence to tradition on the part of the people and the corruption and misuse of power on the part of governments as the factors responsible. It was not so much this wholesale gloss of African peoples and governments that was surprising (indeed this paper fit in well with the others in that sense). Rather, it was the metaphors the presenter chose to make his points that astounded me. He likened African government officials to sorcerers and cannibals and the people to the tradition-bound, hapless victims of both. His use of these metaphors was sustained and he went beyond employing them as literary devices, rendering them in effect "generative metaphors" in his discussion of how Africans were in reality still tradition-bound consulters of sorcerers and practitioners and/or victims of cannibalism.

I was appalled and looked around for the eruption that I was certain would greet this portrayal. Instead I was greeted with the studious looks of both Africans and non-Africans present and a few bent heads of people taking notes! I wanted at the very least to simply stop the proceedings. What was I to do? I could no longer sit there and continue to listen to the presentation. I did not feel I knew enough about development studies to mount an academic challenge to the content of the paper. It was also obvious I would not be supported if I did speak up. I ended up standing up and saying half aloud, "I won't sit here and listen to another word of this racist drivel." I left.

I went to another session at which one of the presenters declared that a good development program was like "a good woman"—not too costly and there to serve you when you need it. Again I waited for the audience to erupt and they did; they erupted in laughter. Again I left.

I could not help but feel my reaction in both circumstances was woefully inadequate. By walking out, I had removed myself from the situation, but had done nothing to change the racism and the misogyny I had witnessed. I have since told myself that what needed to be addressed in those sessions was not so much the academic knowledge being displayed, but the taken-for-granted Eurocentrism, misogyny, and racism that underscored the scholarship. I have also told myself that at the time I was very angry, shocked, and relatively insecure, a combination that meant it was unlikely I would be able to articulate an overtly political intervention in

those staid academic circles. At the time, however, it was feelings of inadequacy in terms of my lack of knowledge of the subject matter of development studies that dominated my thoughts. If only I had known more about development studies, I thought, I could have spoken up. I decided to read in the area and turned first to the Africans I knew at OISE who worked in the area of development studies: George Dei, Njoki Kipusi, Njoki Kamau, and others. Their work threw me right into the fray of the controversy over development since they were working with and formulating new, African-centered conceptualizations of development and development studies. Even before I read mainstream development texts, therefore, I already had some knowledge of what was problematic about hegemonic development discourse and how progressives around the world and feminist and Marxist Africans in particular were redefining development praxis. I have since attended other CASID conferences and now, armed with some knowledge of development discourse in general and progressive reconceptions of development in particular, I can and have made interventions at sessions I have attended. To my relief, I have attended quite progressive sessions and have not had to deal with the overt racism and sexism I encountered at my first CASID conference.

"What Has Literature Got to Do With It?" (Chinua Achebe)

Diawara (1992b) and Corrigan (1995) have both emphasized that cultural studies should emerge or mutate to fit the circumstances of specific locales, times, and populations. In other words, because the specific sociocultural and political concerns and interests of Zimbabweans might be different from those of Canadians, the manifestation of cultural studies that emerges in Zimbabwe might be significantly different from cultural studies in Canada. It would be counterproductive, therefore, to attempt to merely "apply" established (western) cultural studies models to African situations or to insist that cultural studies deal with the same issues in Africa as it does in the west. These differences operate not only in terms of the very discrete, micro level but also at the more macro socio-geographical level. In spite of admonishments about specificity, therefore, it is possible to identify what have become general cultural studies concerns in the west and to contrast these with what are or could be identified as general cultural studies concerns in Africa. The following example is illustrative. One of the perennial concerns of cultural studies in the west is the bridging of the divide between high and low culture.[1] While Africans could be interested in addressing this issue also, it is in all probability not

as pervasive a concern. A parallel perennial African concern is rather the relationship between "traditional" and modern culture, the place of tradition in a modernizing Africa. In the same way that the writer of a treatise on cultural studies in the west might address the relationship between low and high culture as a dominant issue, I have chosen in this chapter to identify the perennial African concern with the place of tradition in a modernizing Africa as a cultural studies concern and to address elements of this pervasive African sociocultural issue. More specifically, I draw on Achebe (1988c) to make the argument that literature studies reconceptualized as cultural studies (and therefore inclusive of traditional performance forms) combined with a consideration of education in general (both modern and traditional) can contribute significantly to the theory and practice of African development.

Certain African-centered advances in the fields of development studies, reappraisals of the place of indigenous African education, and literature studies reconceptualized as cultural studies can, in combination, create a discursive environment in which it is possible for literature studies as cultural studies to contribute significantly to the development process in Africa. While development praxis began as a purely economistic field, virtually every contemporary school of thought on the matter would incorporate a human element in its conception of development and would regard education as an integral tool in engendering development. However, education in development discourse is almost always synonymous with western formal schooling, and few development theorists and practitioners indeed would consider indigenous African education as having a place in the study much less the process of development. In fact, indigenous African education would conventionally be considered to be regressive and anathema to development. Similarly, literature studies is probably one of the last subjects of formal schooling that comes to mind when one considers disciplines that could contribute to development studies and the development process. Given that literature has been perceived and indeed has operated as an elitist, insular, aesthetics-driven discipline, and given that indigenous African education is widely considered as regressive and anachronistic, the notion that the two might have anything to contribute to development appears initially as nothing short of ludicrous. This is because in contrast with literature, development has traditionally been perceived and has operated as a purely utilitarian, economistic discipline, and in contrast with indigenous education, development has been associated with "progress," the abandonment of tradition, and the embracement of modernization and westernization. However, I

hope to illustrate in this chapter that recent African-centered reconceptions of the nature, aims, and function of development, reconsiderations of indigenous African education, and a reconceptualization of literature studies as cultural studies not only engender compatibility between the three discourses but can enable literature studies as cultural studies to contribute substantially to the development process in Africa.

This chapter is both inspired by and based on Chinua Achebe's essay titled "What Has Literature Got to Do With It?"[2] In it he shows that literature can contribute substantially to the development process in Africa. His title indicates his acute awareness that literature studies and development are not traditionally associated with one another.[3] However, by bringing the two together Achebe engages in an exercise in what I have recommended in Chapter Two of this book, namely, utilitarian literature studies. In other words he provides a concrete example of how an African-centered version of the traditionally anti-utilitarian discourse of literature could be appropriated and made to serve the cause of a decidedly utilitarian discourse.

Having identified development (or as he prefers, modernization) as the undisputed comprehensive goal of "developing" countries, Achebe goes on to point out that what is in dispute is "the quickest and safest route for the journey into modernization and what items should make up the traveler's rather limited baggage allowance" (Achebe, 1988c, p. 106). In a move that exemplifies his argument that literature can contribute to development theory and practice, Achebe provides us with the following couplet:

> There! we have it on the best authority
> Theorists of development cannot agree! (Achebe, 1988c, p. 109)

Here Achebe deliberately chooses to make a point about development theory and praxis through poetry. Although the example is playful and quite perfunctory, it serves to give an indication of the point that underscores the entire essay, namely, that literature (in this specific case, poetry) can be pressed into the service of discussions concerning development.

While agreeing with the conventional notion that education is an indispensable item, crucial for the journey, Achebe argues forcefully against the conventional position that the liberal arts constitute unnecessary and retrogressive baggage which weigh and slow Africans down on their journey to modernization. He points out that it is short-sighted and in the end counterproductive for developing countries to reorganize their entire educational systems in such a way that they emphasize the sciences

and technology and make severe cuts to the arts, all in the name of tailoring education to development needs. His argument is that such so-called pragmatic changes fail to recognize not only that people need a well-rounded education but perhaps more significantly that the liberal arts themselves in general, and literature in particular, can contribute significantly to addressing the issues faced in considering the direction, pace, and requirements of development and social change.

In contrast with conventional notions of development, which Marchand and Parpart (1995), among others, have criticized as equating modernization with westernization, Achebe argues that maintenance and utilization of traditions in general and orature in particular need not be contradictory to a process of modernization.[4] He points to a process of modernization, cosmopolitanization, and the creation of a modern identity, on the one hand, accompanied by a process of traditionalization and the retrieval of a long established, now threatened traditional identity, on the other, as a viable and productive paradox. One needs the rootedness of the latter, he argues, to balance the venturism and uncertainty of the former.

However, Achebe does not take up traditional culture as purely stagnant nor merely as a restrictive force of conformity. In fact it is a revised notion of traditional culture that he employs in illustrating how, beyond being a source of stability and familiarity, tradition can actually promote change. Taking up Igbo parables as literature,[5] Achebe illustrates that orature offers not only explanations of the status quo of social values but also, in some cases, instigation of revolutionary social change:

> ...stories can combine in a most admirable manner the aesthetic qualities of a successful work of imagination with those homiletic virtues demanded of active definers and custodians of society's values.
>
> But we must not see the role of literature only in terms of providing latent support for things as they are, for it does also offer the kinetic energy necessary for social transition and change. (Achebe, 1988c, p. 115)

If we (re)conceptualize development as more than a process of economic growth, then we can begin to see how orature contributes to development by creating the space to put forward ideas about how, why, and in what direction social change should take place. Turning to Nigeria as an example, Achebe declares that "what Nigeria is aiming to do is nothing less than the creation of a new place and a new people. And she needs must have the creative energy of stories to initiate and sustain that work" (Achebe, 1988c, p. 116).

Thus Achebe sees orature (or, as he prefers, oral literature) fulfilling a dual role in relation to development. First, it serves as a stabilizing force in terms of providing proven and reliable values and perspectives as Africans launch into the uncertain and destabilizing process of change involved in modernization. Paradoxically, however, it also serves as a catalyst of change, pointing to the need for change and the directions in which society should be moving and why.

In the essay, therefore, Achebe succeeds in fashioning literature into a utilitarian tool, one that contributes significantly to the discourse and process of development. Further, he operates with an expanded notion of literature which incorporates orature. He also takes up the contribution of culture seriously in addressing issues of development. Finally, even though he does so in the most perfunctory manner, he undertakes an instance of the performative in constructing and including the couplet on development theorists, and thus moves beyond theorizing about the contribution literature could make to development discourse. Even though Achebe does not work in the area of cultural studies, it is my contention that this essay could be said to constitute (albeit in a limited sense) a heuristic cultural studies exercise.

In the rest of this chapter I will extend Achebe's project by introducing some of the relevant background that provides a context and history for some of the stances he takes, addressing some of the issues he either glosses over or takes as given, and extend the project by examining some of the issues he treats in greater depth and by addressing additional issues. The following are the major issues I treat. First, I provide something of a context for Achebe's politicized and utilitarian literature since it can be better appreciated in the context of the worldwide overt politicization of literature and the insistence of African critics and authors that African literature is both political and utilitarian. Second, while Achebe devotes only one paragraph to the link between education and development, I explore this link in greater depth as a primary concern throughout the chapter. Also, while he deals comprehensively with orature and identifies it as a form of literature, Achebe does not classify it in terms of forms of education (i.e., is orature to be employed in development discourse through formal schooling, through indigenous education, or heuristically in a post-indigenous education context?) I examine how orature could play a role in development as a part of formal education, and how it is also one of the possible bridges between what are currently very distinct systems, namely indigenous and formal education. Also, Achebe restricts himself to orature and does not say what literature in its traditional sense

(novels, poetry, plays) can contribute to development.[6] I therefore deal with both aspects of the orature/literature continuum and its potential for contributing to development. Third, while Achebe provides a clear and expanded definition of development, he also indicates, without explaining why, that he is uncomfortable with the term and prefers "modernization."[7] To contextualize Achebe's stance and reveal its relevance to development discourse in general, I point to other theorists who are equally uncomfortable with the concept of development as well as to arguments regarding the (in)appropriateness of the concept and politics of development. Finally, I also provide information on work which parallels Achebe's but which is being undertaken not by literary critics but by development theorists and practitioners. My approach is not to stick closely to Achebe's arguments and add to or amend them. Rather, I am more concerned with drawing loosely on Achebe in order to construct a similar project.

"Literature is dead, long live theory." (Ben Marouchi)

The politicized and utilitarian conception of literature Achebe employs can be linked to the general paradigm shifts in knowledge production, evaluation, and dissemination. We live in a time when the conception, production, and dissemination of what is considered valid knowledge are in a veritable state of flux. In particular, the global hegemony of patriarchal, Eurocentric knowledge is being challenged through emerging identity politics-based discourses such as feminism and Afrocentrism, and through postmodernist, poststructuralist, and postcolonialist reconceptions of the world. It is a time, therefore, in which the traditional praxis of both literature studies and development is under attack.

As far as literature studies is concerned, theory and criticism, which used to depend on literature for their existence and which used to be its servants, have not only declared their independence but now appear to shun literature as an old, distant, and irrelevant relative. This is a time when critics such as Eagleton (1983) have actually called for the death of literature, and Marrouchi (1991) has gone further and boldly declared, "literature is dead, long live theory." The virtually miasmic spread of indulgence in theorizing apparently as an end in itself, and the related rapid proliferation of theories (especially in the west) has been described disparagingly by Christian (1990) as a Eurocentric "race for theory." Meanwhile, the new discourses of media studies and cultural studies threaten to make literature studies redundant in the west, and the economic and political crises in Africa and the consequent emphasis on tech-

nological and infrastructural development threaten to render it an ostentatious indulgence in African institutions. It is little wonder, therefore, that Kernan (1990) has warned that, far from being the wishful thinking of a few madcap professors, the death of literature is in fact imminent and can only be stayed by a reconceptualization of literature and its role in society. What is clear from all of this is that literature studies, in effect, can no longer afford its traditional insularity, elitism, and exclusivity, and its universalist, "apolitical" aim to simply "instruct through delight."

The insistence of many African writers and critics, from Soyinka (1976) to Nkosi (1981), Izevbaye (1971), and Onoge (1985) that African literature is political and utilitarian has unfortunately not characterized literary criticism and literature studies in Africa. Instead, African critics have often developed their criticism individually, much like European critics, and the tendency in African classrooms has been to utilize western orientations to literature and literature studies. As a result, all literature, including African literature, has been taken up as if characterized by insularity, elitism, and hyperliteracy. As I have argued in Chapter Two, if literature studies is to survive and thrive in Africa, it will have to be decolonized from the Eurocentric tradition; reconceptualized to make it more relevant to the experiences, values, norms, and worldviews of Africans; refashioned to operate as a means of interrogating, celebrating, and contributing to the development of African cultures and societies; and most important, made to operate within a progressive, multiple-genre (including orature, and traditional and modern performance forms) anti-discipline of cultural studies. In short, literature studies in Africa must become part of African cultural studies.

One stage in this development is the emergence of an African-centered literature studies. This can be said to have started in the 1920s with the work of Negritude poets and critics like Cesaire, Damas, and Senghor. More recently, the work of Ngugi (e.g., Ngugi, 1986) and Chinweizu (e.g., Chinweizu et al., 1983) exemplifies the overt and sustained effort to decolonize and Africanize literature, criticism, and literature studies in Africa. The following are some of the characteristics of an evolving African-centered literary practice. First, it does not have the elitist aim of instructing through delight but the more utilitarian aim of celebrating, interrogating, and transforming African culture in an African-centered project of possibility. Second, while it goes against the grain of the traditional Eurocentric emphasis on aesthetics and suppression of utilitarian value, it does not take up function/utility as an exclusive end in itself, by declaring as Bennet (1990) does that aesthetics is "really useless knowl-

edge." Rather, drawing on traditional African perceptions of art and performance, it recognizes that aesthetics and utilitarian value are in fact very closely, if not inextricably, linked. It therefore steers a course between what sometimes becomes narrow African functionalist criticism and traditional Eurocentric "apolitical" criticism. Third, it replaces the Eurocentric preoccupation with the individual in the creation and appreciation of literature with an African-centered notion of social and communal motivation, creativity, and appreciation. Fourth, it reverses the traditional western hierarchization that assumes the superiority of written over oral forms and conceives of drama (especially as performance) as a dubious genre of literature, situated on the fringes of fiction and poetry. The call to reflect the centrality of orature in general in African ceremonial and everyday life in African literary practice has been made by Aidoo (see Elder, 1987), Ngugi (1986), and Okpewho (1992), among others. Although he chooses not to articulate a history of this revised version of literature or indeed to justify working within it, it is clear that in his essay, Achebe is indeed working within such an African-centered version of literature. In fact by concentrating almost exclusively on orature and by adding an element of performance, he goes beyond African-centered literature into African cultural studies.

"[Development Is] A Concept Full of Emptiness." (Wolfgang Sachs)

The notion of development Achebe employs in the essay is as expanded and unconventional as his notion of "literature." Here also Achebe may well be working with international theoretical contentions over the meaning and scope of development and more closely within a loose tradition of African-centered (re)definitions of development. It is useful to provide this context since it might help clarify Achebe's position while contributing to my extension of Achebe's project. It bears pointing out at the outset that there is a bewildering plethora of definitions, and conceptions of as well as approaches to development. As Black (1991) points out, development "has no precise meaning, no generally accepted definition... Like other terms that have acquired a positive connotation, development is user-friendly: It means whatever one wants or needs it to mean" (p. 1). Although Black is right about the ambiguity and adaptability of the term "development," other theorists would strongly disagree with her depiction of the term as "user friendly" and would consider its malleability a negative characteristic, one which masks its nature as a dangerous ideology. Wolfgang Sachs (1992), for example, describes development as "a con-

cept full of emptiness" (p. 6) and goes on to point out that "development thus has no content but it does possess a function: it allows any intervention to be sanctified in the name of a higher, evolutionary goal. Watch out!" (p. 6).

Some critical African development theorists and practitioners would agree with Sachs. In fact, the term development has become quite controversial in contemporary Africa and elsewhere in the world for various reasons. Despite interventions and very gradual mutation, dominant development discourse was and is always already liberal, capitalist, economistic, modernist, male-centered, and colonialist and/or imperialist. It has therefore drawn criticism from feminists, anti-colonialists, postcolonialists, and anti-imperialists, leftists, nationalists, traditionalists, postmodernists, environmentalists, and critics who subscribe to various combinations of these political standpoints.

The position of women in development is particularly useful in illustrating mainstream development's problematic nature and the criticisms that have been leveled against it. In the 1950s and 1960s, development theory and policy was heavily based on growth models (e.g., Rostow, 1960). The idea was that entire countries and regions in the Third World would grow as the world economy grew, and development would trickle down from the rich countries to the poor. Development was conceptualized on a grand scale and the particularities of specific regions or groups such as women were not considered. Other approaches such as basic needs, dependency, and neo-Marxist theory and models followed the growth model. Development discourse became more diverse and contested but still did not take women seriously into account. The 1980s saw the emergence of structural adjustment programs (SAPS) which were employed by the IMF and World Bank as a means of getting indebted Third World countries in the black as a condition for development assistance. SAPS were not only gender blind in their assumptions but as Heward (1995) points out, they

> have greatly increased the burdens on women, with severe consequences for children's welfare. The response of policy-makers to such critiques was to introduce safety nets to mitigate the effects of SAPS on the most vulnerable groups, but the effects on girls' school enrollment has been significant.....safety nets are [in effect] 'add ons' with marginal effect. (p. 2)

The Kenyan feminist Maria Nzomo summarizes the positioning of women in development in Africa through the various shifts in theory and policy when she declares that

> The development crisis we see in Africa.... is to a large extent a reflection of decades of experimentation with theories and models of development which were manufactured in the North and unsuccessfully tested in Africa and other Third World countries.... In all of these changes and policy shifts, African women have never been given adequate attention as the major producers and reproducers of labor and national wealth. (p. 139)

This is not to say that women have not been taken into account in development theory and policy. In the period between the 1970s and the present, development theorists and policy makers have been cajoled by feminist critiques from within and from without to take women seriously into consideration. Development theorists and policy makers started to pay some attention to Third World women with the publication of Esther Boserup's (1970) landmark text, *Women's Role in Economic Development* in 1970. From the 1970s to the late 1990s, taking women seriously into account has led to alternative development discourses, first of Women in Development (WID), then Women and Development (WAD), and most recently, Gender and Development (Heward & Bunwaree, 1999).

The Nigerian feminist literary critic, Molara Ogundipe-Leslie has put forward the concept of STIWAnism (Social Transformation Including Women in Africa), and Heward and Bunwaree (1999) among others have advocated a shift from Women and Development to Gender and Development. While these feminists have worked for the inclusion of women in development or, more recently the discursive shift from access for women to women's empowerment through development, ecofeminists such as Maria Mies (1989) and Vandana Shiva (1989; see also Mies & Shiva, 1993), have advocated an abrogation of the discourse and practice of development. In their ecofeminist stance they eschew masculinist and capitalist competition and exploitation of nature and women for profit and instead promote a combination of minimalist self-sufficiency, harmony with and conservation of nature, and feminine/feminist collaboration. This ecofeminist stance dovetails to an extent with that of some Marxist critics of development such as Sachs, who has severely criticized the historical and contemporary discourse and process of development and recommended the simple and complete abrogation of the term and a rejection of the practice of development.

Of these two approaches, working for radical change from inside/outside the discourse and the abrogation of development, most African theorists and critics appear to choose the former strategy, partly because it traditionally connotes the existence of something in some countries (i.e., the developed world) and a lack of that thing in others (i.e.

developing, least developed countries), creating a hierarchy of advancement that comes uncomfortably close to suggesting a hierarchy of degrees of civilization. It may well be this suggestion of a hierarchy of civilizations that underlies Achebe's discomfort with the term and leads him to declare that

> The comprehensive goal of a developing nation like Nigeria is, of course, development, or its somewhat better variant, modernization. I don't see much room for argument about that. (Achebe, 1988c, p. 106).

It is clear from the quotation that, although he does not tell us what distinguishes development from modernization for him, he prefers to talk of modernization rather than development. After indicating his discomfort with the term development, Achebe goes on to use modernism and development interchangeably throughout the essay, and this begs the distinction he tries to make between the two concepts. Perhaps another factor which needs to be considered here is the possibility that the term development is controversial for Achebe because of the interrelated fact that some development theorists find the conventional, economistic discourse of development oppressively restrictive.

In the 1950s, development was taken to be a purely economic concept, one which took per capita income as the chief indicator of level of development and Gross Domestic Product (GDP) as a conventional tool to measure rates of growth. As a field of study, development involved the economics-based study of the process of modernization. In contemporary times, however, the purely economistic notion of development has come under considerable attack from Marxist theorists in the west and from a variety of Third World theorists also. For example, Sachs (1992) has written what he calls "A Guide to the Ruins" of development. His play on the term "ruin" suggests both the ruin that narrow economistic conceptions of development have wrought on the "Third World" and also the idea that this concept is antiquated, dangerously narrow, and counterproductive and is or ought to be "in ruins." The economistic discourse of development continues the exploitation of certain parts of the world, a process started with European colonization and now manifest in the unequal and exploitative relations manifest in present-day capitalism. From its purely economistic definition of poverty to its destruction of subsistence economies, from its hierarchical, imperialistic assumptions (western modernization being a norm to be imposed on the rest of the world) to its failure to benefit rural populations even in situations where it produces increases in gross domestic product, from its ever changing focus to its

declining significance in a so-called "new world order" in which the watchword of the only remaining super power and the North in general is now "security," from its promotion of dependence on the part of developing countries to its ruin of self-sufficient small-scale economies in the name of raw material production for the "world market," development has been decried as too malleable, contradictory, paternalistic, and counterproductive. As Sachs (1992) concludes

> The idea of development was once a towering monument inspiring international enthusiasm. Today, the structure is falling apart and in danger of total collapse. But its imposing ruins still linger over everything and block the way out. The task, then, is to push the rubble aside and open up new ground. (p. 6)

What Sachs advocates, then, is the complete abrogation of the terms *discourse* and *process* of development and a return to the drawing board in order to come up with a more progressive alternative.

"Africa needs fundamental change and transformation, not just adjustment." (Adebayo Adedeji)

While they would share Sachs's criticism of historical and contemporary theory and practice of development, progressive African development theorists appear less ready to undertake a simple abrogation of the term, and rejection of the practice of development. Dei (1992a), for example, asserts that

> ...I do not think replacing development with another terminology is the answer, [rather] I do recognise that perhaps there is an urgent need to deconstruct what conventional development has come to mean and to reconstruct what contemporary development could more appropriately be for local peoples. (p. 5)

Dei chooses to step inside/outside the discourse and praxis of development to insist on both a deconstruction and a reconceptualization of development.[8] He advocates the implementation of certain progressive changes that would produce the results African and other Third World peoples' desire. Adedeji (1990) shares this position and in the following critique of "structural adjustment" (the currently popular model of development being applied in/imposed on Africa and the Third World in general), outlines in broad strokes what a reconceptualization of development might entail in terms of goals:

> Africa needs fundamental change and transformation, not just adjustment. The change and transformation required are not just narrow, economic and mechanical ones. They are the broader and fundamental changes that will bring about, over time, the new Africa of our vision where there is development and economic justice, not just growth; where there is democracy and accountability not just despotism, authoritarianism and kleptocracy; and where the governed and their governments are moving hand-in-hand in the promotion of the common good, and where it is the will of the people rather than the wishes of one person or a group of persons, however powerful, that prevails. (Adedeji, 1990, p. 37)

African intellectuals who hold similar views have taken up the task by insisting first and foremost on broadening the concept of development to refer in much more general terms to what Gandhi (quoted in Adedeji, 1990) called the "realization of the human potential." The result of this reconceptualization is a notion of development that embraces everything from economic growth to quality of life, from social justice to equitable distribution of income, and equality of opportunity for all citizens (Asante, 1991). Also, instead of the focus on countries and economies, some Third World intellectuals (e.g., Turok, 1987; Rodney, 1981; and Dei, 1992a, 1993) have insisted that the focus should be on people; that the ultimate purpose of development must be the progress of humankind. This view has translated into a concern for development at the individual level, and Rodney (1981) in particular stresses that development involves increased skill and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self-discipline, and the material well-being of individuals. Even so, Adedeji (1990) proposes national and collective self-reliance as a fundamental development strategy appropriate for Africa. Similarly, Kipusi (1992) and Dei (1993, 1992a) stress that development cannot be granted from outside but must be conceptualized and generated from within communities; and Amin (1975, 1990) encourages Third World countries to resist being dictated to by the developed countries and to insist on negotiating their relations with the developed world on their own terms. Underlying much of even purely economistic conceptions of development are factors of social difference such as race, class, gender, and sexual orientation. The work of Africans such as DuBois, Garvey, Fanon, and Nkrumah, who were interested in the decolonization of Africa and the political emancipation and empowerment of Africans everywhere, can be said to constitute early African-centered articulations of development (see Taylor, 1989). Achebe offers this definition of development:

> What has literature got to do with it?
> In the first place, what does 'it' stand for? Is it something like increasing the GNP or something metaphysical like the It which is the object of the quest in Gabriel Okara's novel, *The Voice*?
>
> I should say that my 'it' begins with concrete aspirations like economic growth, health for all, education which actually educates, etc., etc., but soon reveals an umbilical link with a metaphysical search for abiding values. In other words I am saying that development or modernization is not merely, or even primarily, a question of having lots of money to spend or blueprints drawn up by the best experts available; it is in a critical sense a question of the mind and the will. (Achebe, 1988c, p. 115)

Whether or not he is drawing on these African development theorists, Achebe's definition of development (which is heavily influenced by the African discourse of literature) fits into the tradition of African deconstruction of conventional definitions of development and reconceptions of development, emphasizing the sociocultural rather than the economic. What Achebe's definition introduces is a strong emphasis on culture and values, an emphasis shared by certain African development theorists (e.g., Matowanyika, 1991; Dei, 1993, 1992a, 1990).

What is obvious from these snippets from Africans' conceptions of development is that they variously emphasize a range stretching from the individual to the local community to the nation to regions of several countries. Some stress the political while others put more emphasis on the cultural or the economic. The notion of development I wish to utilize here is not restricted to any level nor to the biases of any one discipline. Instead, in keeping with a cultural studies approach, I will utilize a comprehensive notion of development, one which traverses conceptions ranging from the individual to the regional and emphasizes the interplay between various disciplinary perspectives.[9] Thus the notion of development I employ promotes self-reliance and collectivity among African states, emphasizes people over economies of states, draws on local people's culture, values, and aspirations for their communities, and is concerned with social justice, democracy, and human rights.

It is in the context of this comprehensive notion of development that I am discussing the contribution literature as cultural studies (principally in the context of formal education) could make in addressing development issues such as African collectivity and self-reliance, the celebration, interrogation and transformation of culture and society, literacy, social justice, and democracy.

"My commitment as an African, the need for me to be an African nationalist...[is] pressing." (Ama Ata Aidoo)

As far as African collectivity is concerned, African development theorists such as Adedeji (1990) have argued that because some African countries are so small and/or have such low levels of per capita income, African states need to pool their economies and development efforts. Adedji asserts that little progress can be made by individual African countries without cooperation among them. Africa does in fact already have organizations such as the Organization of African Unity, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and the Intergovernmental Authority on Drought and Development (IGADD) in the Horn of Africa, as well as other attempts at collectivity. Shaw (1992) and Ramphal (quoted in Shaw, 1992) among others strongly believe that despite the shortcomings and failures of some attempts, regional cooperation is a key strategy for engendering development in Africa. As far as some of those shortcomings are concerned, I believe that attempts at creating collectivity are limited and limiting because they are too often restricted to economic collectivity. In my view, adding to and/or taking seriously a sociocultural dimension in such organizations would enhance better understanding between the peoples involved (as opposed to only the governments) and would create a more comprehensive unity among Africans as well as enhance the possibilities for economic collectivity to succeed. Literature as cultural studies could contribute substantially to this process by enabling students to study the societies and cultures of other African countries through works from those countries. The African literature sections of the West African "O" and "A" level literature syllabi (see WAEC, 1988), are an example of how the literature of African peoples can be disseminated all over Africa. What needs to be done, however, is to emphasize the cultural aspects of such texts rather than merely take them up as literature and look for so-called universal literary items like character, style, and plot.

Furthermore, there is a need to share and compare elements of African orature between ethnic groups and across national and regional boundaries. While sharing literature (in its traditional sense) would be restricted to situations of formal schooling, orature could be taken up both in formal education and used in community-based discussion situations. Although aspects of orature are often taken up informally in schools (specifically at the primary level), many African countries (e.g., Sierra Leone) do not include orature in their formal school curriculum. There are some countries, however (e.g., Kenya), which do include orature, not

merely as part of extracurricular activities, nor only at the primary level, but also at the secondary level. In fact the Kenyan secondary school syllabus includes oral literature as an aspect of literature studies at every level of secondary education from form one to "O" Level (Kenya Institute of Education, 1992; Kenya Ministry of Education, 1992). The following are sample extracts from the Kenyan Ministry of Education syllabus (Kenyan Institute of Education, 1992):

FORM I
5.0 LITERATURE . . .
5.12 Oral Literature
Oral literature should help the learner to appreciate the cultural roots of his society and equip him [*sic*] with a critical and creative awareness of his dynamic environment. The learner should note that Oral Literature can be an effective tool in enhancing other writing skills e.g. narrative compositions.

The following are some of the genres of Oral Literature:
- oral narratives;
- poems (sung and recited);
- proverbs;
- riddles;
- tongue twisters;
- children's games.

5.13 Field work
In this course, fieldwork is an important activity in the learning of oral literature. The learner is expected to carry out field-work of a limited nature. He should collect oral narratives, poems, proverbs, riddles, songs, tongue twisters, children's games etc from the immediate social environment and present to his class for discussion. It should be noted that discussions at this level should be aimed at the learner's enjoyment and not for serious analysis. Oral literature materials collected should be stored in folders for future use. (p. 53)

FORM IV
19.12 Oral literature
The study of oral literature in form four as in form three should aim at developing the learner's ability to analyze literary aspects such as narrative and dramatic techniques, creating of atmosphere, time, form and style. The oral literature material so far collected should be used in training the learner to acquire the techniques of transcription, translation and analysis of material.
During discussions on the collected materials, the learner should be encouraged to perform his [*sic*] materials in class. (p. 64)

The extracts indicate that oral literature as it is conceptualized in the Kenyan curriculum already includes several characteristics which indicate

that it has some potential to contribute to development studies and practice. However, the framework within which oral literature is set is still one which appears to conceptualize written literature as a superior form to which oral literature should aspire.[10] Several changes and improvements are necessary, therefore, for oral literature as it is conceptualized here to be transformed into orature as an aspect of cultural studies and thereby to contribute significantly to development studies and practice. Of particular importance is the element of performance: the requirement that students collect and perform orature means that orature is not merely taken as text to be read (as in literature) but as text to be performed. This is an element which makes it akin to orature as cultural studies. What needs to change are the aims of "studying" orature and the means of introducing orature into the school setting.

In terms of the aims of orature, it is interesting to note that at present at the lower grades (see the extract on form I), the aim is to "help the learner to appreciate the cultural roots of his society and equip him [*sic*] with a critical and creative awareness of his dynamic environment," and students are merely supposed to "enjoy themselves" and not study orature seriously. At the upper levels (form IV), however, the aim is to develop "the learner's ability to analyze literary aspects such as narrative and dramatic techniques, creating of atmosphere, time, form and style" and students study orature seriously at this level. These aims are reflective of a literary framework in which the overall aim is to get students to take up orature as literature: serious analysis is represented by elements of literary analysis, while non-serious analysis is represented by links between orature and community. A cultural studies approach would demand the exact opposite: the aim at the higher levels of schooling would be to examine orature for what it says about different community values in a country or in Africa in general, to make those stories and values part of the curriculum (to be learned as well as interrogated). It is these issues which are ultimately of the most importance and which are linked to sociocultural analysis and African collectivity. At the lower levels, students can be introduced to the performance criteria (which need not be the literary elements mentioned in the current curriculum). These elements are important for understanding the forms and should form the foundation on which more complex sociocultural and political analysis would later be based.

In terms of introducing orature into the school, the present curriculum demands that the students collect the stories, proverbs, and so on, and introduce them into the school. The community is, of course, the source of these stories; and what the present arrangement does is draw on

community knowledge yet maintain the separation between school and community which colonial education introduced to Africa and present-day formal education keeps in place. It would be preferable to have the community members who are the experts in orature (students' parents and grandparents, elders in the community, storytellers, praise singers, drummers, chroniclers, etc.) introduce such orature into the school. It is also important to ensure a parallel process is undertaken which would see students performing in the community. Such performances would constitute reciprocity in terms of school/community relations, ensuring that in return for the community becoming an important part of school culture, the school becomes part of the community culture.

This dual process of introducing the community into the school and the school into the community would recreate the link between education and community which used to exist in indigenous education systems. It would resurrect both in the school setting and in the general community some of the content of indigenous education and the reverence for the wisdom of elders and traditional performers which existed in traditional society.[11] As far back as the 1960s, the poet Okot p'Bitek (1967) had gone as far as to advocate that oral historians be recruited as university professors and school teachers. The serious study of orature in the school system would facilitate the much belated implementation of his recommendation. The curriculum recommends that students' stories be collected for future use but does not specify how this is to be done. It would be preferable if performances of orature were given by community experts and were recorded (in audio but preferably in video) for distribution well beyond the borders of an ethnic group or even a country and be appreciated and utilized in other communities (in translation if necessary).[12] In terms of collectivity, Africans could in this manner produce a canon (or a number of canons) of orature, and this development would both testify and contribute to African collectivity. Through such collections it is possible for Africans who experience such an education to grow up with knowledge of other African cultures and to think of themselves as part of an African collectivity.

The notion of African collectivity should also involve a move away from Eurocentric preoccupations with the individual to recapture the strength and interdependency of traditional African communalism. John Mbiti (1969) captures this idea of the strength of community in the African individual's identity in his declaration that the individual can only say "I am because we are and since we are, therefore, I am" (p. 108). Communalism is in fact a key characteristic of African indigenous sys-

tems. As Njoki Kamau (1992) has declared, "The philosophical foundation of African indigenous education...was communalism or group cohesion" (p. 5). She goes on to assert that indigenous education among the Gikuyus of Kenya, for example, places strong emphases on social responsibility, group history, job orientation, collective learning, and political participation. In contrast with indigenous education and its emphasis on communalism, colonization introduced Eurocentric education with its emphasis on individualism. The imposition of individualism on Africans resulted in the necessity for students to develop an almost schizophrenic orientation that stressed communalism while in the community and strict individualism in order to succeed in school. This schizophrenic orientation was not easily maintained, and many students, as a resolution of the dilemma, chose to repudiate communalism. As a discipline, literature epitomized this promotion of and indeed demand for individualism and the resulting schism between community and formal education values. However, some African writers and critics have attempted to recapture communalism by emphasizing the social and communal aspects of writing, "reading," and meaning-making rather than the individual writer and reader and individual readings. Achebe (1964, 1975), for example, stresses the social role of the artist in African art, and Ashcroft et al. (1989) point out that

> this insistence on the social role of the African artist and the denial of the European preoccupation with individual experience has been one of the most important and distinctive features in the assertion of a unique African aesthetics. (p. 125)

Taking up literature studies seriously as cultural studies would mean promoting a concern for the individual as a social animal and embracing and promoting notions of collectivity and communalism rather than individualism. This attitude of collectivism is a crucial element in communal involvement in development projects.

Finally, African collectivity involves a comprehensive notion of African identity. From Pan-Africanism to Negritude and most recently to Afrocentrism and the Black Atlantic, Africans both continental and diasporic have been actively promoting such a notion of global African *recueillement*. It is important for our sense of identity to stretch beyond the narrow confines of ethnic group, beyond the foreign, colonial construction of nation, to an identity that links us to other Africans in a global African family. In the attempt to foster such a comprehensive African identity, the literary works of the Negritudionists are invaluable. Despite

their diverse locations on the African continent and in the Caribbean, poets such as Cesaire and Senghor were united in a fierce and overtly stated pride in their African identity, and their poetry could not only teach but inspire similar notions of a comprehensive African identity. This is especially important for continental Africans who tend to take their "Africanness" for granted and to emphasize ethnic over continental and Pan-African identity.

"Let me tell you what we have done to improve ourselves"
(Dinka chief, quoted in Deng, 1985)

As far as the issue of self-reliance is concerned, Ali Mazrui (1967) and others had, as far back as the 1960s, warned of the danger of neo-dependency following the flag independence of African states. Almost three decades later, Mazrui (1992) still had cause to discuss the existence and persistence of the dependency of African countries on former European colonizers and new imperialists (the prime example being the United States). Mazrui (1992) goes to the heart of the role universities have played in maintaining several forms of dependency, especially cultural dependency:

> African universities have often been expected to serve as major instruments of development in their societies. But what if those universities also constitute links in a chain of dependency?...
>
> An institution can itself be dependent without necessarily spreading dependency over the wider society. But the university in Africa is not only sick itself—it is also a source of wider infection and societal contagion. That is why this paper is about cultural dependency, and not merely about academic dependency within the university structure on its own. (p. 95)

Here Mazrui makes a point which has quite significant implications for the way the university is perceived in development discourse. While education is usually seen as a crucial element of development and the university as the principal means of spreading the highest and best form of knowledge, Mazrui's intervention turns this conception on its head by pointing to the university as an agent of neo-dependency and the primary means through which both academic and cultural dependency are spread and perpetuated. The position Mazrui takes here should serve at the very least as a caveat to the hegemonic perception of modern formal education as inherently positive in terms of its relevance to individual, community, and national development. Mazrui recommends three broad strategies that would overturn African universities' promotion and perpetuation of dependency: the first is the domestication of modernity, which he elabo-

rates as relating it more firmly to local cultural and economic needs; the second involves the diversification of modernity in Africa such that the foreign reference group of the African is extended beyond the west to include other non-African civilizations; and the third involves Africans counter-penetrating the western academy and western civilization with African cultural and knowledge production. Mazrui ends by strongly advocating independence and self-reliance as crucial for the decolonization of African education.

It is obvious that the goal of ending neo-dependency and engendering African self-reliance is yet to be accomplished, whether in education or any other sphere. In terms of resisting neo-dependency, it is the few African countries that deliberately chose not to become capitalist satellite states and de facto neo-colonies of western countries which succeeded to varying degrees in creating and maintaining national self-reliance. Prominent among such countries are Guinea (under Ahmed Sheku Turey) and Tanzania (under Julius Nyerere). In the struggle to achieve self-reliance, however, it should be remembered that Amin (1990) proposes "delinking," not "autarchy." One of the factors that contributed to the limited success of the Guinean revolution is the fact that it was characterized by autarchy: Guinea severed virtually all ties with the outside world. Nyerere's (1968) more successful philosophy of *Ujamaa*, however, involved self-reliance and African communalism but not necessarily autarchy. The lesson to be learned from these two examples is that African states should not attempt to be completely isolationist and self-sufficient but rather should look first to themselves for development and should construct their own terms for engaging the outside world.

In the case of literature, Soyinka (1976) has made an argument that parallels Amin's recommendation of delinking when he asked why should Africans accept the literary tradition handed down from the west and attempt to incorporate our tradition into theirs in "a fiat of instant-assimilation poetics" (p. 63). African literature as cultural studies could be an important aspect of the process of delinking. It does not mean that western literature and literary tradition will not be taught in the African classroom but rather that African literature as cultural studies will be taken up as a distinct tradition with distinct, utilitarian aims and a focus on cultural and sociopolitical analysis. It also means that other literatures can be taken up utilizing an African cultural studies framework for understanding them. Students who are educated in such a system are much more likely to become leaders who will articulate their own terms for accepting

aid from or undertaking jointly sponsored programs with governments and agencies in "more developed" countries.

Also, self-reliance means making do with scant resources in the classroom. While I have advocated the recording and spread of orature through video and audio recordings, I also believe that in situations where it is technologically impossible or prohibitively expensive to undertake such projects, innovations such as shoestring school productions of plays rather than video or film screenings, and the use of locally produced texts instead of expensive imported texts are ways of making do while promoting self-reliance. In fact such measures should not be perceived as making do, but rather as vital steps in the creation of an African-centered literature studies. Furthermore, because there would be much less reliance on imported textbooks and other materials, such measures would help lower the cost of education without sacrificing quality, a prospect which is extremely important in cash-strapped contemporary African countries.

Conventionally, development projects are initiated at the national level. They are reflective of international and national politics and do not take into account the politics, needs, and perspectives of local peoples. Many such projects have either failed completely or have failed to benefit rural and poor people in Africa. Theorists such as Dei (1993), Porter, Allen, and Thompson (1991), and Deng (1985) have insisted that in order for development projects to be successful, they should reflect the interests, concerns, and worldviews of local peoples and that the local population should be involved at every stage. In his cultural studies approach to historicizing India, Ranajit Guha (1982) makes a parallel point when he declares that mainstream histories of India have been woefully inadequate and unrepresentative of the vast majority of Indians because they have been based on the perspectives and concerns of the colonizer or the elite that emerged after colonization and have failed to include what he calls "the politics of the people."

Taking the politics of the people into account could mean radical changes in the scope, approach, and goals of development. One old woman in rural Kenya asserted that she was tired of the abstract concept of development that people kept asking her about in a policy of consultation from which she and her community had seen no tangible improvements. She asserted that development for her meant making sure she had food, shelter, and clothing: her development tools were her water pot and digging hoe. In other words, in place of the large-scale projects the experts wanted to discuss with her, she was much more interested in self-reliance and what Adedeji (1990) has called self-sustainment.[13] When the

local people are consulted and included in more than a perfunctory manner, they are more likely to contribute to and participate in development projects:

> This wound you see on my hands is a wound from making roads. Ever since the government came, my people have been building their own roads. Money has never come into my tribe to be paid for working on the roads. And if you, our educated children, need money for development, the cattle at home are all in your hands. Many of the things in the tribe at home are all in your hands. Many of the things in the tribe are in your hands. Just show us what we can do with them. (Dinka chief, quoted in Deng, 1985)

The chief's statement reveals the self-reliance that has characterized local efforts at development.[14] He is puzzled by the fact that at a national level development cannot be undertaken without his already cash-strapped community's economic contribution, but he is prepared to lend such support.

On the other hand, limited involvement or non-involvement of the local people results in the failure of development projects and promotes cynicism in the local population about development projects. In fact, the vicious cycle of lack of consultation and project failure leads to what Ngau (quoted in Porter, Allen, and Thompson, 1991) calls "disempowerment and departicipation" among local communities.

"How can I be happy with my class position when the majority of my people are living in poverty? What arrogance have I to talk of myself as having succeeded?" (Micere Githae Mugo)

As far as democracy and social justice are concerned, much of African literature is concerned with these issues. As a writer and a critic, Soyinka once declared, "I have a special responsibility because I can smell the reactionary sperm years before the rape of the nation takes place" (quoted in Gibbs, 1980, p. 11). It is a similar nose for corruption and concern for human rights that literature as cultural studies would seek to foster. If the sociopolitics of literature in general and African literature in particular were emphasized, as they would be in the new discourse of African cultural studies, literature would become a means of allowing students and teachers to interrogate local, regional, and global sociopolitical issues in the classroom. Such issues are treated not only in contemporary literature texts but also in traditional orature. Achebe (1988b), for example, provides two Igbo parables which he describes as being inherently political, and he pro-

ceeds to deconstruct them to unearth both their regulatory, tradition-affirming message and their subversive, revolution-instigating undertones. Parables and stories could therefore provide a means of addressing the status quo in society and envisaging a more equitable society.

Also, literature could be promoted as a subject that deals with the engagement of issues such as the politics of region, ethnic group, class, and gender. Discussing the portrayal of women in a novel, for example, should lead to a discussion of how women position themselves and are positioned historically and in contemporary times in different cultures. To continue with the gender example, there is a whole range of positions that African women writers take on the issue of women and literature. When asked her opinion on an African feminist critic's declaration that the African female writer should be committed as a woman, Buchi Emecheta (in James, 1990) responded by declaring:

> What does she mean by commitment as a woman? A writer is a writer, and writing is sexless. But you can write from a particular situation, for example, if you are a working-class person and you want to highlight the oppressed conditions of your class, or you want to write about women and men. I suppose they are all connected. (p. 40)

In the same collection of interviews, however, in contrast with Emecheta, Ama Ata Aidoo (in James, 1990) declares that

> ...the question of the woman writer's voice being muted has to do with the position of women in society generally. Women writers are just receiving the writer's version of the general neglect and disregard that women in the larger society receive. I want to make that very clear. It is not unique. Now, as to the issue of where the female Achebes and so on are, you know that the assessment of a writer's work is in the hands of the critics and it is the critics who put people on pedestals or sweep them under the carpet, or put them in a cupboard, lock the door and throw the key away. I feel that, wittingly or unwittingly, people may be doing this to African women writers; literally locking us out, because they either don't care or they *actively hate us*. (pp. 11–12)

Emecheta's position is self-contradictory, but understandably so, since it appears to be one which reflects both the traditional conception of the writer and literature as "apolitical" and also a politicized notion of literature. With a cultural studies approach, students would come to see literature and writing as inherently political, not only in terms of class issues—which Emecheta almost reluctantly accedes—but also in terms of gender, sexual orientation, language, ethnicity, and region. They would therefore be engaged in an approach to studying the politics of literature from a

perspective which takes Aidoo's position as given and would be engaged in exploring, discussing, and working to address the conditions and processes in the literary and wider society which produce the situation Aidoo describes.

While the vast majority of African writers have concentrated on politics and social commentary in their works, many have gone beyond writing to become involved in politics in its most concrete and conventional form. For example, when Jerry Rawlings took power in Ghana and introduced what Ama Ata Aidoo considered a progressive government, she served as Secretary for Education from 1983 to 1984:

> underlying everything has been this concern for the African revolution. The notion that I have been a minister isn't difficult. I thought at that time the most valid thing I could do was to be the PNDC Secretary for Education, because I believe that education is the key, the key to *everything*. Whereas I do not discount the importance of my work as a writer, of the possibility of doing things with my writing, I thought that out there as minister, or whatever, you have a direct access to state power, to affect things and to direct them immediately. That is why I went to be a minister. (p. 11)

Aidoo reveals that before becoming a minister, she had been working for the African revolution through her writing. Being Secretary for Education was a faster and more direct way to continue the work she had been doing as a writer.

Students should be given the opportunity in the cultural studies class to celebrate culture but not simply to romanticize it. As Amin (1990) points out, "nostalgic culturalist nationalism is a symptom of the crisis and not an answer to it" (p. 67). Students should be given the opportunity to go beyond examining the position of writers and traditional story-tellers to actually articulate their own vision of a more democratic and just society. Such exercises would be projects in creative writing or oral story-telling which would also serve the purpose of getting students to think beyond the immediate and to imagine a world that does not yet exist. Furthermore, they would expand the range of possibilities in terms of agency of students and their human capacity in and through their location in the site of social formation that is the school. Students would in short be engaged in what Simon (1988) would refer to as a project of possibility. In undertaking such projects, students should be encouraged to make the connections between identity politics, social justice, and African development.

"The dynamism of orality might be something that Africa can give the world." (Ama Ata Aidoo)

The promotion of local and regional languages which literature as cultural studies entails would engender the production of texts in local languages, the standardization of written forms of languages that are at present written but not standardized, and the evolution of written forms of African languages that do not currently exist in written form. Also, it would promote student literacy in local languages. Perhaps most important, it would contribute to the process through which an Africa-wide lingua franca would emerge. Penina Muhando (in James, 1990) is representative of the African writers who choose to write in one of the primary candidates for an African lingua franca, Swahili:

> **Adeola:** As a committed writer, it would appear that you see your most important preoccupation as the development of Swahili literature. Is that a correct assessment?
>
> **Penina:** I always say that writing in Kiswahili is for me automatic. I cannot see myself writing in English.... There is also the question of developing Swahili literature, which is also very important.... So I think it is only natural that the writing be done in Kiswahili, which is adding to the richness of the language. Even in my life time, Kiswahili has gained momentum, it is growing up as a language. Some new terms are coming up, new expressions....The language itself is growing very, very fast. (p. 82)

Literature as cultural studies could be a means of undertaking the project of developing Swahili as Africa's lingua franca. It could not only produce the audience for authors like Muhando but also promote literacy in Swahili in Africa. Finally, it could also facilitate the promotion of African collectivity which the emergence of an African lingua franca would evolve.

Beyond mechanical or lay literacy, however (that is, learning the mechanics of how to read and write), African-centered literature studies would promote the ability to read critically (Willinsky, 1990). This means that students would be encouraged to "read the word and the world" (Freire & Macedo, 1987); to interrogate not only texts but the world around them; and to begin to articulate their vision of how society could be improved. Similarly, writing skills should not be looked upon as merely neutral but as inherently political. Acquiring writing skills begs the question for students (including adults) of what they are to write about. With regard to accomplished writers, Ama Ata Aidoo (1990) has asserted

that it is essential for African writers to continue to write, as their political contribution to Africa. Vusamazulu Mutwa (1965) turned to writing and wrote a collection of essays on Zulu history, customs, and beliefs as a first step in fulfilling an oath he made at the funeral of his lover who was killed in the Sharpeville massacre. While Mutwa's writing is the result of a very overt type of politics, it should be remembered that a cultural studies perspective would encourage students to realize that all writing is in the end always subjective and (whether consciously or not) reflective of a particular politics. As such, while they may not have as dramatic and specific a writing project as Mutwa, students should be aware of and should actively consider what/whose politics their writing reflects in the issues they choose to write about, the perspective they bring to the issues they treat, the forms and diction they choose to employ, and the purpose of their writing.

It should be emphasized, however, that literacy is not in and of itself a panacea for all sorts of social problems. The alarmist talk of a crisis of literacy in western countries like Canada and the United States, in the face of the fact that millions of people elsewhere live very fruitful lives without lay literacy, is an indication of western hyperliteracy. We must never forget that this sort of discourse undermines any attempt to take seriously the wealth of oral tradition we have in Africa and the use we should be making of orality in communication. Aidoo puts the case thus:

> I totally disagree with people who feel that oral literature is one stage in the development of man's artistic genius. To me it's an end in itself.... We cannot tell our stories maybe with the same expertise as our forefathers, but to me, all the art of the speaking voice could be brought back so easily. We are not that far from our traditions. (quoted in Elder, 1987, p. 109)

Aidoo's statement conveys several important messages. First, she expresses resistance to the Eurocentric perception that orature is a stage in the evolution of literature (and therefore inferior to written literature). Second, she asserts the need to reclaim, practice, and cherish (and I would add critically interrogate) a traditional African form which (educated) Africans have started to lose touch with in our pursuit of Eurocentric forms. Third, she presents a strong case for the celebration and utilization of orality as a medium of communication and artistic expression instead of an overreliance on the hyperliteracy of Eurocentric genres. Thus in African-centered literary practice, orature would not only be regarded as a legitimate aspect of literature but would in fact become the crucial, pivotal genre(s). In promoting orality through African-centered literature

studies we would be avoiding the pitfalls of western hyperliteracy and the stigmatizing of "the illiterate" among us.

When the relationship between orality and literacy is considered, the convention has been, and hegemonically continues to be, to consider literacy a natural improvement on and progression from orality. Hence societies which employ orality exclusively are described as "pre-literate." The designation "pre-literate" is part of the general Eurocentric development discourse which can only see oral cultures as being less evolved than literate cultures and can only perceive orality as a stage in the inevitable road to literacy. Societies which do not go beyond this stage are perceived as somehow atrophied. An example of this characterization can be found in Walter Ong's (1982) *Orality and Literacy*:

> Oral cultures indeed produce powerful and beautiful verbal performances of high artistic and human worth, which are no longer even possible once writing has taken possession of the psyche. Nevertheless, without writing, human consciousness cannot achieve its fuller potentials, cannot produce other beautiful and powerful creations. In this sense, orality needs to produce and is destined to produce writing. Literacy, as will be seen, is absolutely necessary for the development not only of science but also of history, philosophy, explicative understanding of literature and of any art, and indeed for the explanation of language (including oral speech) itself. (pp. 14–15)

In short, Ong denies the existence of history, philosophy, and even the very ability of people who created orature to explain their own creativity and worldview. To anyone from a predominantly oral culture like myself, it is clearly preposterous to assert that knowledge creation, self-reflection, the explanation, examination, and critique of artistic production, and the articulation of one's worldview are not only impossible to undertake through orality but that they in fact only emerge and become articulable through literacy. What is remarkable about Ong's work is not so much the fact that it is based on this Eurocentric, literacy-fixated perspective of the relationship between orality and literacy, but that it is widely regarded in both progressive and mainstream circles as a classic text which seriously engages orality as a viable means of communication and examines its relationship to literacy without creating a hierarchy of forms. This in itself "speaks volumes" about the hegemony of literacy and the blindness of the literate world to the limits of literacy and the strengths of orality; points which, ironically, Ong himself attempts to make through his "literate-centric" work.[15]

African cultural studies would be a means of breaking with this Eurocentric, evolutionary, and disparaging conception of orality. It would

be a means of exploring and utilizing orality as a viable and even predominant form of communication and documentation of information as well as a way of explicitly studying (without necessarily rendering them mutually exclusive) African philosophy, orature, and other disciplines. In examining the relationship between orality and other vehicles of communication, African cultural studies would reject the hierarchical orality/literacy duality for a consideration of orality in isolation, as well as orality in writing and in televisual and electronic literacy, seeing all these forms as being intricately linked in the postmodern world.

Finally, centering orality would open up the possibility of taking performance forms more seriously in African educational systems, a development which would add substantially to the performative aspect of African cultural studies. As documented in the work of Kidd (1979) and Mwansa (1985), popular theater has been utilized quite directly and successfully in non-formal education, adult education, and community development projects in Africa. If taken up in mainstream education as what I have called critical African drama (Wright, 1994b), this work of utilizing drama in the service of the community and in adult education and literacy programs would make literature studies a direct and integral part of the development process. I pointed out earlier in this chapter that involving community performers and traditional teachers in the educational system would forge links between school and community. Popular theater exercises would be another means of forging such links, this time in the opposite direction: that is, they would bring school, college, and university artists into the community to portray and address issues of concern to the local population. Such exercises need not be mutually exclusive in fact, but could well involve the inclusion of the local population in the popular theater productions (e.g., as consultants in identifying the issues to be addressed, as singers, dancers, drummers, and actors).

"Divining Development: A Generative Metaphor?" (Doug Porter, Bryant Allen, & Gaye Thompson)

I have concentrated throughout this chapter on arguments from the literature side (whether from oral literature as in Achebe's argument, or orature and literature as aspects of cultural studies in my argument) in putting forward the notion that literature can contribute significantly to development studies praxis. Rather than reiterate these arguments in conclusion, I wish to point in closing to the fact that at least one set of development experts is making similar arguments within development dis-

course. Porter, Allen, and Thompson's (1991) *Development in Practice: Paved With Good Intentions* involves an in-depth examination of why a specific long-term development project in rural Kenya failed. Their recommendations for more successful projects are sweeping and go well beyond tinkering with small elements to a virtual redefinition of development that corroborates and reflects the reconceptualizations of development proposed by progressive African development theorists. The authors' central recommendation is that the local people must be consulted and involved in the process of development, from conceptualization to implementation to utilization of the project. What is particularly remarkable is that they introduce a performance/development juxtaposition in the process of analyzing and evaluating the roles of participants in the development project.

Porter, Allen, and Thompson begin by asserting that, though the non-governmental organization (NGO) involved in the development project attempted to utilize a promisingly popularist approach to development, it did not take into account the fact that its "methods of acting upon the world of development practice were being practiced equally, if not more popularly among the Giriama" (p. 181). They point out, for example, that the role of development worker is similar to that of the local diviner (both advise the people on the type of projects to be undertaken, formulate time schedules for projects, and predict outcomes, and both are experts whose advice and predictions are sometimes thwarted or proven wrong). Thus, initially, the authors appear to be merely employing a literary device, that is, using divination as a metaphor for development praxis, making an allusion between diviners and development workers. They soon make clear, however, that their intention is not to make a superficial analogy but to assert and illustrate that the diviner and development worker perform roles that are genuinely similar:

> Whereas the superficial analogy of development workers and diviners has startling parallels at the level of legitimation and "facipulation," it is limited by their fundamentally different working environments, in other words, their respective professional commitments to scientific and mystical explanations. But what of the development practitioners' rituals? The rituals for establishing certainty within development practice, cost-benefit analysis for example, like those of diviners, are explicitly concerned with prescription and even prophesy. (p. 191)[16]

Here the analogy goes beyond the purely literary to become functional: as the authors make clear in one of their section titles, they are employing divination as a "generative metaphor" (p. 183). What the metaphor generates in fact is a reexamination of the role of the develop-

ment worker in terms of a popular, local, African framework and worldview (albeit juxtaposed with the traditional Eurocentric and academic framework). This generative metaphor enables us to see the development worker's activities in the same light as the diviner's, namely, as ritual and performance. Porter, Allen, and Thompson's main purpose in drawing this analogy is to point to the fact that the culture, framework, and the actual work of development and development workers need not be conceptualized and operationalized as being as alien to the local environment as they are currently.

Although they avoid being evaluative at this stage of their analysis, it is possible to draw on the information Porter, Allen, and Thompson provide on the development worker/diviner comparison to examine why and how the ritual performance of the diviner has credibility with the community and why and how the ritual performance of the development worker met with much less success. The diviner's success is due to the ability to adapt to circumstances, to consciously reflect or work with (or against) the people's wishes, to consider history and time as non-linear, and to postpone outcomes rather than set rigid timelines which mean that time can itself produce failure. Conversely, the development worker comes in with fixed plans, procedures, and time schedules, none of which are easily adaptable to day-to-day changes in the field and each of which in its fixity engenders failure when the situation calls for flexibility and adaptability. The failures of the diviner, therefore, appear to be delays in fulfillment or minor failings which can be attributed to secondary sources (which the diviner readily identifies and the people acknowledge) and do not necessarily shake the people's belief in him or her. In contrast, the failings of the development worker can be cumulative and obvious to both him or her and the people, and his or her placing the blame for failure on the entire community (or worse yet, on himself or herself) does not engender the confidence of the people.

In this chapter I have attempted to show how literature as cultural studies could contribute significantly to the discourse and praxis of development. While Achebe's (1988c) essay in which he juxtaposed literature and development constituted the inspiration and starting point of this chapter, I have attempted to elaborate on Achebe's points and to broaden and strengthen the argument by introducing other points which support his basic thesis. It should be noted that if conventional conceptions of development and literature had been utilized by either Achebe or myself, the juxtaposition of the two would remain not only unproductive, but untenable. The possibility of literature contributing to development is

only made possible through a reconceptualization of both literature and development. As evident in the work of Porter, Allen, and Thompson that reconceptualization can be and is being undertaken by development theorists also. In fact, in contrast to the presentation I witnessed at CASID, which thrust me into development studies, Porter, Allen, and Thompson illustrate clearly that local African performance in particular, and culture in general, can be utilized in a serious, systematic, productive analysis of development in Africa.

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Chapter Five

Concluding Scattered Speculations on African Cultural Studies[1]

Letter From Africa

Date: Mon, 24 Apr 1995 08:04:00 -05:00
From: Alistair Coker <Alistair.Coker@AC.BAOBAB.COM>
<LEONENET%MITVMA.BITNET@uga.cc.uga.edu>
To: Multiple recipients of list LEONENET
<LEONENET%MITVMA.BITNET@uga.cc.uga.edu>
Subject: Letter from Africa

The driver's name is Sulaiman. I hear he is well, but I do not know where he is now.

He's a young fellow, and quite well known on the Tormabum-Sumbuya-Koribundu-Pujehun routes. Quite the typical passenger van driver. I'm told his home town is a small village just south of Sumbuya, in the Southern Province, 50 or so miles from Bo. I can easily picture his vehicle in my mind.

It's probably a small Toyota pickup with the rear modified at a local shop to accommodate passengers. A metal cover is constructed, tall enough to permit headroom for passengers seated on benches. There are typically three of these benches, one on each side plus one in the middle, though some drivers add a small fourth bench crossing the tops of the three just behind the cab. The corners by the front are good places for a very small child, but not much else.

Passengers face each other and interlock knees. The standard traveling posture requires that one arm clasp a bar conveniently welded above the benches, the bend of the arm thereby forming a convenient pillow for the head during a long voyage.

Small bags and sometimes chickens are stowed under the benches. Bigger boxes, produce, heavy luggage, goats, etc. are tied on top of the rear seating-area cover. The "apprentice" or driver's assistant, who collects money and supervises the interlocking—knees process to assure that passengers are tightly packed, either hangs from the rear or sits on top with the bags.

On rainy days, canvas flaps are unfurled and flop on the outsides of the side openings and the rear door. With all the flaps down, the temperature and humidity quickly rises inside. Sometimes the rear is left open, but this can create a peculiar vacuum effect that will suck dust into the seating area until the rain packs the dust down.

>From Bo to Sumbuya, in good times, a journey might take anywhere from two to four hours, depending on stops. The road as far as Koribundu is now nicely tarred, part of the optimistic Freetown-Monrovia international highway.

>From Koribundu to Sumbuya the road is—well— seasonal.

People say Sulaiman is crazy. A more plausible story is that he regularly partakes of raffia palm wine and cannabis, sometimes separately. Thusly fortified, he has no fear of transporting passengers where few others dare to travel.

A Nigerian colleague remarks that alcohol and marijuana are common tools of military forces in many countries. Such drugs were regularly used by his own Biafran military command to bolster the courage of the hapless Ibo. At about 3 o'clock each morning the troops would be roused from their foxholes by a quartermaster distributing bottles of locally brewed gin. In the brutal and chaotic hand-to-hand battles characteristic particularly of the last days of that war, there was no other way to keep soldiers from simply melting away into the bush.

Crazy Sulaiman.

Government and BBC radio both reported the attack on a transit transport vehicle somewhere along the road between Koribundu and Pujehun. It is not at all clear to me what happened, but I gather that the vehicle was stopped by gunfire or perhaps by a rocket-propelled grenade launcher. ("RPG" is the name used here. Few know what the acronym means, but everyone knows what the weapon looks like.)

Two women transporting fish from Bo to Pujehun were stabbed. They perished. Most if not all of the men escaped with their wounds, fleeing helter skelter into the bush on either side of the road.

A driver here in Freetown who is himself from Sumbuya tells me that Sulaiman escaped. He believes that the attack described on the radio was indeed the very same attack on Sulaiman's vehicle.

I recall hearing some weeks earlier that a man and some young boys were captured by Government security forces in Bo and charged with collaborating with the enemy. The apparent evidence was that they were found purchasing provisions that they intended transporting into the bush. Radio says that the arrested man's name is Margao, which is a common name in the area just southeast of the Sewa River. Radio says he confessed to being a rebel.

I wonder if the two women killed in Sulaiman's vehicle were similarly transporting goods to the bush. I wonder who was their intended recipient. I wonder as well who was the intended recipient of the goods Mr. Margao was purchasing in Bo.

I purchased a frozen yogurt from a petrol station manager late last week, when news of the attack on the Pujehun vehicle was just emerging. The manager commented that the rebels were now concentrating on Freetown, and that the Pujehun vehicle attack was likely committed by mere bandits, perhaps deserters from regular Government forces.

But who can say? What can we really know from our post here in Fortress Freetown?

Crazy Sulaiman.

—-* Origin: African Connections (5:7831/102.61)

African Cultural Studies Forms and Mediums

Cultural studies could be said to exist in Africa in two main manifestations; the organized, officially recognized, university-based programs of cultural studies, and the more heuristic, community-based, non-self-identified forms of cultural studies. The Centre for Cultural and Media Studies in Durban, South Africa, is an example of officially organized cultural studies. Though university-based, it is praxis-driven and heavily involved in the community, and its orientation could be considered anti/inter/postdisciplinary. The community-based, grassroots, political, cultural, and artistic work done by Ngugi and the villagers at the Kamiriithu Community Education and Cultural Center in Kenya could be considered a heuristic form of cultural studies. Also it could be argued that, considered in combination, the literary, cultural and community, and political work of figures like Wole Soyinka, Mariama Ba, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, and Nawal el Saadawi are a heuristic form of cultural studies. A case can also be made for regarding specific African cultural writings, such as Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Moving the Centre: The Struggle for Cultural Freedoms* and Wole Soyinka's

Art, Dialogue and Outrage: Essays on Literature and Culture, as cultural studies exercises. In addition to orature, literature, and performative acts, African cultural studies would necessarily incorporate electronic media and technology and therefore forms such as radio, television, film, and the internet. My intention in this chapter is, in part, to discuss the viability of two of these forms (the internet primarily and film secondarily) as aspects of African cultural studies.

Unlike literature, orature, and performance forms, electronic media do not have a well-established history and tradition and are both relatively new and scarce, especially in the African context. Thus my discussion of e-mail and how it could be adapted to and incorporated into African cultural studies is more speculative than my discussions of oral, written, and performance forms in/and cultural studies. My intention, therefore, is to start from as grounded and specific a position as possible, attempting at various stages to anchor my speculations and proposals in the limitations and possibilities of the existing situations. The story with which this chapter begins provides a concrete situation and an existing "text" that I can use to launch an argument about the viability of the internet in general and e-mail in particular as an aspect of African cultural studies.

Locating African Cultural Studies in Cyberspace

This book has concentrated on an analysis of three aspects of the proposed anti-discipline of African cultural studies, namely orature, literature, and performative acts. However, African cultural studies would necessarily incorporate electronic media and technology and therefore forms such as radio, television, film, and the internet. My intention in this final chapter is to discuss the viability of two of these forms (the internet and cinema) as aspects of African cultural studies and conclude with a retrospective evaluation of the possibilities and limitations of African cultural studies as it has been articulated in the book.

While much of the discussion in the book has been propositional, provisional, and speculative, the speculations have thus far been grounded somewhat in the existing traditions of literature studies and the employment of orature in indigenous and contemporary education in Africa. Electronic media, on the other hand, have no such established history and tradition and are both relatively new and scarce. The result is that my discussion of these forms and how they could be adapted to and incorporated into African cultural studies is even more speculative than my discussion of oral, written, and performance forms. Furthermore,

because I will be attempting to address several electronic forms in a single chapter, my analysis will be necessarily brief, wide-ranging, and thus "scattered." My intention, therefore, is to start from as grounded and specific a position as possible, attempting at various stages to anchor my speculations and proposals in the limitations and possibilities of the existing situations. The story with which this chapter begins provides a concrete situation and an existing "text" that I can use to launch an argument about the viability of one form, namely the internet in general and e-mail in particular as an aspect of African cultural studies.

Taking up E-Mail as Cultural Studies Text

Sierra Leone suffered through a civil war that lasted from 1991 to 2001 (a period Ibrahim Abdullah (2002) has aptly referred to as "Sierra Leone's wasted decade").Since the civil war broke out in Sierra Leone in 1991 (some say it spilled over from neighboring Liberia, others say it was the result of purely home grown dissension), Sierra Leoneans abroad have been trying to keep abreast of the situation, to discuss the issues involved with one another and with people in Sierra Leone. This attempt to keep in touch and informed has been a haphazard and frustrating experience for many Sierra Leoneans abroad as they have had to rely for the most part on letters and the odd phone call from home as well as the few items on the news.[2] Rumors and counter rumors were bandied about; some news items reached some people quite fast and others took months to get out LEONENET, an internet list devoted to issues relating to Sierra Leone was established in 1995 and has become the node through which Sierra Leoneans at home and abroad can discuss issues, and keep each other updated about the war and about life in Sierra Leone.

When I joined LEONENET in March 1995, a vibrant internet community already existed and there was quite an emphasis on news items. One contributor, Patrick Muana, in Sheffield, England, provided regular synopses of BBC coverage of Sierra Leone issues in general and the war in particular, while another, Willie Nicholson, forwarded news texts verbatim from Reuters. On a much more sporadic basis, (e.g., Osman Sankoh, 24 April 1995), there were postings from Sierra Leone of press releases from the United States Information Service in Sierra Leone. The story that starts off this chapter, however, is a sample of what became, for over a year, a regular "column" by Alistair Coker on LEONENET. While news items on Sierra Leone are posted regularly on LEONENET, Coker's letters served for an extended period as the primary means through which "Leonenetters"

abroad got a feel for the everyday struggles and activities of Sierra Leoneans during a particularly critical period of the long, ongoing war.

Beyond being personalizations of news items, however, Coker's letters revealed much about what could be called the electronic aspect of African cultural studies. The posting, like all of Coker's postings, is performative. First, it could be read as a combination of news (factual, informative, educative) and fictional tale (entertainment, speculation, crafted story). The material he has to work with in the posting reproduced here (Coker, 24 April 1995) include a news item on the radio about an attack on a transport vehicle between Koribundu and Pujehun, a report from a driver that one of his colleagues had been attacked along that some road, and an earlier report that government forces had captured people on that road who had later confessed to being rebel sympathizers. Coker draws on these three reports to construct a story which blends the three (perhaps unrelated) stories together, painting a vivid composite picture for his audience. The slippage between fact and fiction is understood by the audience, even openly acknowledged by Coker: "It is not at all clear to me what happened, but I gather that the vehicle was stopped by gunfire or perhaps by a rocket-propelled grenade launcher." Coker (3 May 1995) starts another of his letter with "This is the story, as best I can understand it. I suppose the full story won't be known for some time" and then proceeds to give a full, vivid, eyewitness-type account of how a corporal's leg got blown off during a pitched battle with the rebels. This combination of detailed account and lack of confirmed factual detail makes for a bad account in traditional journalistic terms, but Coker is not working within that genre; rather, he is telling a story with a typical Sierra Leonean combination of fact and speculation employed in plausible (and in this case composite) reconstruction. Incidentally, such accounts are in fact always considered more plausible than either pure speculative accounts with no facts to back them[3] or official government accounts (which people have learned to dismiss as propaganda). Coker's story is not to be read as a purely factual account, as "this is exactly what happened," but rather as a more pliant, typical account, as "this is the kind of thing that is happening." Finally, Coker's "letters" were received and engaged by other subscribers as performances. Osman Sankoh, for example, took to sending out his own "Letters from Germany" (e.g., Sankoh, 7 August 1995; 11 August 1995, 22 August 1995) addressed and written as "private letters" to Coker. In turn, subscribers who addressed issues raised by Sankoh (e.g. Patrick Muana's (2 August 1995) response to Sankoh's Letter 7) apologized for "eavesdropping" on this "private conversation." All of this

underscores the conception of e-mail as performance since it involves participants in role playing and renders manifest the observation that "stories beget stories beget stories."

Second, it would appear that the perennial problem in African literature of who is to be considered the audience is already being played out on the internet. One would assume that postings on LEONENET about the war and such incidents as the one Coker describes are meant for a Sierra Leonean audience. However, Coker's detailed description of how the pickup trucks are converted to passenger vehicles, how passengers sit in such vehicles, and what goods are transported are quite superfluous to the Sierra Leonean reader, who is quite familiar with the information being presented in such meticulous detail. However, it makes for vital and illuminating background information for the non-Sierra Leonean reader. Is Coker writing for Sierra Leoneans or non-Sierra Leoneans? Is he somehow trying to write for both audiences? The question of who the audience of LEONENET postings is/ought to be came to the fore when some netters started posting entire e-mail messages in Krio and others declared this practice impolite since it excluded non-Sierra Leoneans. The ensuing exchanges, however, concentrated instead on the viability of Sierra Leonean languages as primary means of communication between Sierra Leoneans on the internet and in the educational system in Sierra Leone.

Third, this issue of language brought out many of the old positions, from the efficacy of using Krio, which is already the country's lingua franca, to objections to Krio on the grounds that it favored one ethnic group's language over all the others, from assertions that Kiswahili was destined to be Africa's lingua franca to assertions that Kiswahili was too alien to Sierra Leone and would never "catch on." The net, therefore, provided a format through which the issue of language could be discussed in an interactive, give-and-take situation. It involved proposals, reactions, and counterproposals and the result was a conversation between participants, a conversation which drew in not only the literary scholars and linguists but academics in other fields and many non-academics as well. My own (unposted) observation was that it was interesting how English, despite being the colonizer's language and hence problematic, operated as the "neutral" language in which all this heated debate could take place between Sierra Leoneans from diverse ethnic backgrounds.

For Sierra Leoneans in particular, the detail about how the acronym "RPG" had entered the local lexicon was quite disturbing. It was indicative of the effects of war on the everyday speech of the people of a coun-

try renowned for being peaceful. New words and phrases were and are being coined to explain the status quo. We learned from postings by Patrick Muana (27 April 1995), for example, that renegade soldiers of the elk who, Coker speculates, could have attacked the vehicle were being referred to as "sobels,"[4] and the Nigerian jet fighters employed in strafing RUF (rebel) positions were referred to as "doodlebugs." Muana (27 April 1995; 8 August 1995) reported that even relatively familiar words and phrases had taken on new, context-specific meanings: "commando," for example, now meant an RUF fighter who heads a patrol of locally conscripted youths, while the more obscure "10/10" referred to amphetamines and other drugs taken by RUF personnel prior to major offensives against army troops or civilians,[5] and the area of forest which the RUF was known to have made its headquarters was known as "Burkina Faso."[6]

These three brief points illustrate that it is possible to examine e-mail postings such as Coker's as African cultural studies texts. Designating them as either literature or orature, however, becomes problematic. On the one hand, many of the postings are written and Coker in particular chose to label his postings "letters." The fact that e-mail messages can be printed out as hard copies, to be read and/or stored like any other print text, reinforces the notion that they are in fact written/print texts. However, such written/print texts hardly qualify as "literature" in the traditional sense. In fact, labeling them written texts can be a problematic pigeonholing of e-mail messages since there is a definite quality of orality to them. Coker's well-crafted stories were in fact atypical of the messages posted on LEONENET. Usually, message senders write in such a way that what is produced is more suggestive of an oral text than a written one; they use colloquialisms, throw in proverbs and sayings as they would in a conversation, pay little heed to punctuation and spelling, and often dash off messages in response to messages received only a few minutes earlier.[7] All these factors combine to create the framework of an oral conversation among participants of LEONENET (and other nets). In fact, because of the immediacy of e-mail as an electronic form, there are usually several issues being discussed on the list at any one time, and "reading" one's messages at the end of the day is rather like attending an informal gathering at which several conversations are going on simultaneously. The result of this communalism is the construction of "the net as gathering place,"[8] or as Howard Rheingold (1993) would have it, as a "virtual community." The range of issues covered in overlapping discussions on LEONENET range from the land tenure system in Sierra Leone to lessons in Krio and Temne, from Black African cinema to the perform-

ance of Sierra Leonean athletes at the 1995 world track and field meet in Sweden and the 1996 Olympic Games in Atlanta, from African identity to wedding and funeral announcements, from reviews of literature texts to the price of rice and gasoline in Sierra Leone. Bill Green (1995) among others captures the marriage of the electronic and the oral in e-mail in the phrase "electronic orality." However, it would be equally reductionist to consider e-mail a purely oral form or even a hybrid oral/written form since it is also an electronic form. Sending out and receiving e-mail requires general computer literacy skills as well as skills specific to e-mail. Such messages are facilitated by the existence of nodes and the internet and while the ability to "write/send" and "read/receive" them involves lay literacy and keyboarding skills, it is even more heavily dependent on electronics and specific computer literacy skills.

Thus e-mail produces a new form of communication which is simultaneously written, oral, and electronic. The inclusion of such a form in African cultural studies requires new thinking in terms of meaning-making and utility. In fact, the internet and the "information highway" could be said to be producing a new culture and society, one which does not require a shared physical terrain. In describing a parallel space/society produced through televisual culture, Ferguson speaks of a "decontextualized sense of space-without-space" (Ferguson, quoted in Morgan, 1995, p. 40). What does it mean for Africans, many of whose cultures are primarily oral and biased in favor of face-to-face conversation, to participate in a culture and society involving that space-without-space that is cyberspace, to regard the net as a gathering place? In what ways and to what extent can we adapt to fit such a culture or change such a culture to fit us? What are the new modes of etiquette and ethics required of "cruisers" on the information highway and what do they mean for utilizing the net as a means of conducting/performing the study of culture? What would constitute African cultural studies performative acts on the internet? Does the discussion of a wide variety of social, cultural, and political issues already being undertaken by Sierra Leoneans through the net constitute a heuristic form of cultural studies, or would it take the fashioning of such discussions into a more organized and focused curriculum for it to be considered an aspect of a heuristic Sierra Leonean cultural studies?

How will the emerging cyberculture(s) affect our existing cultures (African and non-African)? At Bill Green's (1995) presentation, one of the questions asked was on the effects/consequences of extended participation in the space-without-space on social skills and participation in "real" society. The implication was that sustained immersion in cyberspace culture

and the virtual community would come at the price of increased withdrawal from real society and the immediate, concrete community.

How can the internet's culture, its processes, and the "texts" produced through it, be taken up in African cultural studies without being merely colonized by either print culture (reduced to a number of downloaded hard copies to be read and appreciated like any other print text) or oral culture (to be taken up simply as a form of oral communication captured electronically)? I am acutely aware, for example, that in my own discussion I have examined Coker's letters mainly as a conventional text (whether written or oral) and dealt for the most part with the content of the letters.

The Political Economy of the Internet in/and African Cultural Studies

Putting forward the claims that the internet is a form which should not be reduced to the oral or the written, and that the net demands new ways of "reading," "writing," and meaning-making as well as new notions of applicability and utility only begins to address what needs to be done to integrate internet culture into African cultural studies and what that integration means for the future of African cultural studies.

The points and questions raised thus far speak to the viability of the net and cyberculture as an aspect of African cultural studies only in terms of the discourse, process, and curriculum of the proposed anti-discipline. Bypassed thus far are issues pertaining to what could be called the political economy of the net and electronic technology in general as they relate to African states' educational institutions and individuals. Put simply, there are numerous factors that make the inclusion of the net and other electronic media both prohibitively expensive and elitist and therefore unfeasible as aspects of African cultural studies in much of Africa in the near future.

The fundamental problem is that electronic technology is still not widely available in Africa. As an e-mail posting by Gumisai Mutume (forwarded by Ali Bouchnib, 17 June 1995) indicates, "A marginalized Africa risks being left completely out of touch by a global information explosion.... Only five countries on the continent—Egypt, South Africa, Tunisia and Zimbabwe—are fully connected to the Internet, the backbone of global networks." It is clear that while African countries are interested in advancements in telematics (such as the convergence of computer, telecommunication, and broadcast technologies), they find even basic telecommunications and internet infrastructure prohibitively expensive. URTNA[9] for example,

is "ill-funded and under utilized and receives dwindling subscriptions from member states. Only a handful of [its 40 member] countries actively participate in Afro-Vision—Algeria, Angola, Egypt, Ghana, Cote d'Ivoire, Nigeria, Senegal, Togo, Tunisia, Zaire, and Zimbabwe" (Gumisia Mutume, forwarded by Ali Bouchnib, 17 June 1995).

In contrast with educational institutions in the west, at which computers are widely and readily available (even to grade school children), computers are still not widely available in Africa, even at the university level. Thus while western curriculum and media studies theorists such as Bill Green (1995) take the widespread availability of computers in schools for granted and concentrate on critiquing the use to which they are currently being put, the notion of a school or even university (humanities) curriculum in Africa which involves computers being available in such numbers that they are readily and easily accessible to teachers and students is at this point in time no more than a futuristic dream.

In a posting to LEONENET, Francis Moijue (19 July 1995) outlines the problems that would be involved in making computers available to Njala College (one of the two sister university colleges in Sierra Leone). The first problem he points out is that there is currently no electricity supply to the campus (because of rebel sabotage of the system) and therefore no way to run the computers. Perhaps a generator could be bought just to run the computers. The next problem is enough money and materials to maintain the generator. Both money and materials could be donated. The next problem is storing the computers so they are both safe from theft and accessible to students on a campus where much of the infrastructure has been destroyed in two rebel raids. Even if a secure accessible building were constructed, it would also have to be air-conditioned (which is prohibitively expensive) since the area is not only hot but extremely dusty. Moijue's somewhat pessimistic though realistic conclusion is that the computers which expatriate Sierra Leoneans proposed to acquire and donate to Njala would be nothing but white elephants.

Where computers are widely available and programs involving their use, such as the media studies program of the Center for Cultural and Media Studies in South Africa, have been set up, they are not only an indication of what is possible in Africa but also an indication of the technological and economic gap between African countries. The lack of widespread availability of technological infrastructure and the prohibitive cost of acquiring an e-mail account in Sierra Leone[10] have meant that LEONENET subscribers are mostly Sierra Leoneans (and non-Sierra Leoneans) in the diaspora (in western countries more specifically), most-

ly academics or relatively well-off business people, and all computer literates. Thus the internet has created a new elitism, one which is even more exclusive in terms of participants than that created through literature. This development means that integrating the internet as a form and tool of African cultural studies entails introducing a new elitism, a prospect which, ironically, undermines the politics of developing African cultural studies as a discourse which undoes the elitism of literature studies.

Despite these problems and dangers, it is my contention that electronic forms in general must be incorporated into African cultural studies. Eugene Baer's (2 August 1995) post on AFRLIT (an African literature site) indicates that at least five full sessions devoted to dealing with electronic technology and Africa/African studies had been accepted for inclusion in that year's African Studies Association conference.[11] In other words, irrespective of the lack of widespread use of the internet in Africa itself, electronic technology is already being increasingly employed in the study of Africa(ns). The need already exists, therefore, for African cultural studies to determine what electronic technology in the anti-discipline might be and what its incorporation means for the future of the discourse and praxis of African cultural studies.

Furthermore, while the incorporation of electronic technology in African cultural studies is even more futuristic than the literature/orature/performative acts model discussed in previous chapters, any attempt to eschew electronic technology in the formation of African cultural studies would result in a situation parallel to that in which English studies in the west finds itself. As a field fixated on and imprisoned by print, English studies in the west initially attempted to ignore electronic media and is now scrambling to incorporate television, film, video, and computers after having recognized that these forms permeate students' and the general public's lives and have become the main sources of their acquisition of knowledge (broadly defined). The field of English is attempting to do this in an environment in which English teachers are ill prepared to deal with the issues (with students often more knowledgeable than teachers about the technology and the program content), and media and cultural studies are vying with English for the ownership and direction of the incorporation of these new elements in the curriculum. Thus the incorporation of electronic technology and its forms in African cultural studies, while futuristic, should also be considered proactive.

Finally, although the process is just beginning in countries like Sierra Leone, I believe that Africa will inevitably become fully participant in the global information explosion. My position is shared by others like Ali

Bouchnib (17 June 1995) who, in the subject heading of his forwarded message from Gumisai Mutume, replaces Mutume's pessimistic "AFRICA-MEDIA: FALLING BEHIND ON THE INFORMATION HIGHWAY" with a more optimistic "AFRICA: An internet 'Invasion' slow but in the making." Also Moijue (21 April 1995) posted a report on a well-attended meeting about the internet sponsored by and held at the United States Information Service in Freetown (USIS), at which a sizable number of people attending were already online, and many others were interested in acquiring the technology and skills. Thus it is only a matter of time before the internet becomes part of the educational system. As one participant at the USIS-sponsored meeting asked, "How will students, our future leaders, become exposed to this new technology? Will the 6–3–3–4 education system incorporate the Internet?"[12] There is therefore a need to begin to work out the ways in which and the extent to which African cultural studies in particular and education systems in Africa in general will incorporate the internet in the curriculum.

Cinema in/and African Cultural Studies

Another important electronic medium which needs to be included in African cultural studies is cinema. It must be pointed out at the outset, however, that it is possible to talk of two types of cinema in Africa: imported films (primarily from Hollywood, Bollywood,[13] and Hong Kong) and African films (that is, films made in Africa, by Africans). Although it is quite possible to utilize selections from imported films in African cultural studies, my main focus here is on African films. Further, a distinction can be made between films (which are an aspect of cinema) and cinema (which is the entire industry, embracing everything from infrastructure to materials, distribution firms to theaters). This distinction is important for political economy analysis since it allows one to examine not only the development and availability of films but the more comprehensive development and viability of cinema as a whole. An examination of African film would paint a rather rosy picture since Africa is producing more and more high-quality and locally and internationally successful films. An examination of cinema, however, would reveal that many of the problems which make the incorporation of the internet into African cultural studies a futuristic dream also apply to other electronic media such as cinema. The following quotation from Paulin Soumanou Vieyra (1989) is illustrative:

> [The] first and primary component of cinema does not exist in Africa. In Africa there are no film industries in this sense. The materials required to make African films are imported from all over the world. At the other end of the chain, as regards the development of film, Africa is only beginning to have its own embryonic industries with the setting up here and there of laboratories, editing studios, auditoria. This aspect of the industry can be found in Egypt and not Tunisia, Morocco, Zimbabwe and South Africa.
>
> While there is no industrial base for African cinema, its commercial organization is in its first and hesitant stages. It is enormously difficult to put a production apparatus in place because of the lack of an infrastructure, of resources, of capital and above all because of the lack of a positive political will. The same applies to the distribution sector, which comes up against Western hegemonies with imperial preferences and maintaining the north-south axis as the privileged route of exchange while impeding any attempts by Africans to organise this market. (Vieyra, 1989, p. 195)

What Vieyra reveals is that while Africans do produce films, African cinema is caught in an economic and political bind which means it is dependent on the west for materials, it lacks control over its own product and depends on the west for distribution, and it suffers from a lack of relevant infrastructure. Consideration of these factors means a recognition that the evolution of African cinema is not restricted to the production of actual African films. A decolonized, independent African cinema can only be said to have emerged when everything from materials to cinema theaters, actors and directors to funding for films, materials to distributors and distribution outlets are all available within Africa.

What does this mean for African cinema and/in African cultural studies? Before considering these elements, my position was that going beyond the analysis of the content of African films to incorporating the actual making of African films would constitute the performative acts aspect of cinema in African cultural studies. While film criticism is informative and even educative, filmmaking adds the creative and utilitarian aspects of acting, filming, directing, producing, and so on, and these factors (in combination with the somewhat more passive elements of criticism) would constitute performativity. However, I also believe now that addressing infrastructure, distribution, and other issues is also part of what constitutes the performative in cinema in African cultural studies.

African Cinema/African Literature

Currently, there are several parallels and points of convergence and complementarity between the development of African cinema and African "literature." One of these is the issue of a comprehensive definition. In

Chapter One I pointed out that critics like Niang (1991) have asserted that because of the variety of cultures and the multiplicity of ethnic groups and countries, it is problematic to speak of African literature. The same argument can be made about the comprehensive category, "African cinema." My position on African literature holds for cinema in Africa also: I believe not only that the comprehensive categories "African literature" and "African cinema" are quite viable, but also that dealing with these comprehensive categories does not preclude an acknowledgment of diversity and, hence, sub-categories. What is important is determining the best criteria to utilize in creating sub-classifications.

Many critics of African film and cinema do acknowledge diversity in African cinema: in his major work, *African Cinema: Politics and Culture*, Manthia Diawara (1992a), for example, examines the continent's francophone, anglophone, and lusophone cinematic traditions. These divisions are quite viable in the sense that they reflect the former colonial powers' influence in the historical and contemporary development of film in Africa. However, they are also ironic in political terms since they homogenize various African ethnic groups from disparate parts of the continent in each comprehensive linguistic category and also reinforce the colonizers' partitioning of Africa. The employment of divisions and sub-classifications is not necessarily a satisfactory solution to the problem of a homogenizing notion of African cinema since it reproduces another, even more problematic form of homogenization.

Paulin Soumanou Vieyra (1989) speaks for the most part in a comprehensive way about African cinema but asserts that in time various national cinemas will emerge in Africa and looks forward to a time when we will "speak no longer about African films but about Senegalese, Nigerian, Ivorian, Madagascan, Kenyan, Cameroonian, etc. cinemas as each of the African countries develops its specific cinema" (p. 198). Thus for Vieyra the issue is developmental: the comprehensive category "African" is employed only because national cinemas have yet to become fully viable. While I endorse this position in terms of the development of various national schools, I also feel that there is an even more important project of African unity, the development of an African cinema, that it ends up undermining.

Nwachukwu Frank Ukadike (1994), like Diawara, uses the classifications anglophone and francophone but, in terms of the comprehensive project of African unity, he mitigates their use in important ways by speaking for the most part more comprehensively about African cinema and Black African cinema. Manthia Diawara (1992a) does deal with more

micro level divisions when he concentrates on specific countries in some of his chapters (e.g., Zaire in Chapter Two and Mozambique in Chapter Six) and provides an in-depth reading of a specific work from a specific ethnic group in another of his works (Diawara, 1989). I believe that the development of linguistic schools and national schools of African cinema (like those in African literature) is not in the end as important as the development of a comprehensive African cinema. Alternatives to linguistic and national schools could be regional (e.g., West African cinema), ethnic (e.g., Fulani films) and gender (e.g., African women's cinema) classifications, which are not only more viable but also more utilitarian in terms of dealing with sociopolitical issues and would parallel the existing/proposed classifications of African literature in cultural studies.

The project of utilizing African cinema for African unity is already underway. Vieyra (1989) mentions various means through which solidarity is being established between different groups in African cinema. These include co-productions "between Tunisian and Algerian film-makers, between Egyptians and Algerians, Nigerians and Malians, Nigerians and Brazilians" (p. 196); various festivals that bring together filmmakers from various parts of Africa including the Pan-African Festival in Ouagadougou, the Carthage Festival, and FESPACO; the numerous collective cinema professionals' organizations and centers formed such as the Pan-African Film-makers Federation, the Interafrican Cinema Consortium, the Interafrican Film Production Centre, and the Committee of African Cineastes. Diawara (1992a) devotes a whole chapter to the history and work of the FESPACO festival.

What all of these developments mean is that the cultural interchange which I pointed out in Chapters Three and Four as so important for Africans in understanding one another's cultures and promoting African unity are being or could be undertaken through the cinema industry. The festivals in particular could be said to constitute performative acts through which African cinema is disseminated and discussed by Africans from around the continent. The collaborative projects between filmmakers from different countries hold out the possibility of developing films that deal with intersections and hybrids of African cultures which will challenge the notion of static, pristine, individual, and self-contained African cultures. This type of collaboration is also possible in theater and African performance but has not been widely undertaken in these forms, and it is virtually unheard of in terms of written texts. Thus cinema already has in place some mechanisms that make it an even more viable contributor to African unity through collaborative work than either orature or literature.

If African cinema compares positively with African orature and literature in some ways, there are also ways in which it is being utilized to complement these forms. For example, part of the statement produced by the participants of the Ouagadougou Seminar on the "Role of the African Film-Maker in Rousing an Awareness of Black Civilisation" reads as follows:

> Co-operation between black writers and film-makers should find its living expression in producing films directly inspired by the works in our already rich and varied literary heritage. This would prevent the cinema from divorcing itself from literary creativity and thus from shutting itself in isolation. (quoted in Diawara, 1989, p. 199)

The filmmakers give precedence here to the larger politics of Pan-African politics and forge a role for African cinema that closely weds it to, even makes it merely reflective of, African literature. As Diawara (1989) asserts, "it is widely believed that film and literature have much in common and that African film-makers should imitate the writer, the griot and other traditional story-tellers" (p. 199). The association between cinema and literature is one which allows cinema and literature to be complementary and grounds African cinema in a particular politics. In fact, African artists who are both writers and filmmakers, such as Ousmane Sembene and Mongo Beti, already span both worlds, and the project of marrying literature and cinema in the name of Pan-African politics is already manifest in their work.

In terms of the African cultural studies project, this link between literature and cinema is fortuitous. Film is already being utilized to produce cinematic versions of African literature, and the proliferation of similar projects could mean that such works could be studied in both film and literature versions, thus creating the opportunity to allow literature to come to life, for literature to be studied as performance, for the similarities and differences between the written and film forms to be explored, and for the blurring of the borders between high culture (literature) and popular culture (film) in the African cultural studies classroom.

In terms of orature and performance, film is already being used as a means of recording and preserving orature.[14] What this means for African cultural studies is that African performances that have been made into films could be used as texts in the cultural studies class. In the current criticism of African film there is already a tendency that regards film as African orature, and in the cultural studies class the intersections and points of difference between the forms and the stories the forms produce could be investigated.

Beyond being a repository for African performance and orature, however, the cinema can and already does act as a catalyst of transformation. For example, Diawara (1989) points out that

> African film-makers distinguish themselves from traditional raconteurs by being futurists. Where the griot's narrative is concerned with disorder and the restoration of traditional order, the film-maker wants to transcend the established order and create a new one. The heroes of the films are usually women, children and beggars; such concepts as neo-colonialism, techno-paternalism. polygamy and sexism are associated with villains. The traditional functions more commonly used by the film-makers are those that work to create revolution in the state, not those that restore the status quo. (p. 206)

Revisionist cinema of the kind Diawara describes fits in quite well with African cultural studies since it contributes to the project of dealing with the sociopolitics of African societies and the progressive transformation of those societies. As indicated throughout this book, African cultural studies is not concerned with the unreflexive celebration of African culture but with the critical examination, celebration, and transformation of African cultures, the search for hybrid cultures, the acknowledgment of change and transformation, and the striving for social justice on a local and continental level through the study and performance of culture.

African Cultural Studies as a Project of Possibility

While many educational institutions of higher learning are or could easily be equipped with the necessary equipment for producing and screening films, many schools may find such equipment prohibitively expensive to acquire. However, the marriage of film and orature need not be restricted to movie-type productions. Video cameras and video machines could be used to produce and play-back locally made tapings of performances and orature which could then be circulated either locally or distributed nationwide or even continent-wide. However, even television and video machines might be prohibitively expensive for many schools (especially in the rural areas of Africa). The widely differing economic, technological, and infrastructural circumstances between schools in different countries, schools in urban versus rural areas, and institutions of higher learning versus secondary schools render the inclusion of cinema in African cultural studies a viable project in the immediate future in some cases and a futuristic project of possibility in others.

In fact these very factors combine to make the entire project of African cultural studies one which is immediately implementable in some

circumstances and a futuristic project of possibility in others. This is because cinematic technology is not only a requirement for cinema in African cultural studies but also for orature and performance (the forms stressed in Chapters Three and Four of this book as central genres of African cultural studies) since it serves as a vehicle for capturing and disseminating these forms. Conversely, audio recordings can sometimes be substituted for video recordings, though it should be pointed out that while they are considerably cheaper, they are a poor substitute since the visual is a crucial and virtually inextricable aspect of orature and other performance forms. Live, small-scale, local performances might well emerge as the primary, most viable, and most utilitarian means of introducing performance and orature as text in the African cultural studies class. They have more immediacy and can often be undertaken at a fraction of the cost of producing even a video-taped production. Such performances are also potentially interactive and would give students the opportunity to interact with performers and ask questions that go beyond the performance itself in ways that are impossible with recorded performances. Again, because of economic cost and the (lack of) availability of materials and infrastructure, African cultural studies may end up looking different in different parts of Africa and at different levels of the educational system.

The intersection of time and economic and technological possibilities/constraints constitutes another factor which may contribute to the uneven development of African cultural studies. Some of the changes proposed in Chapter One for the present English studies curriculum can be implemented almost overnight in some situations. For example, in places like Kenya where the literature syllabus already includes oral literature, all it will take is a shift in focus from literary analysis to sociopolitical and cultural analysis for oral literature in the existing curriculum to become orature as an aspect of cultural studies. In a country like Sierra Leone, where orature is still excluded from the official curriculum, its introduction will appear more drastic, and considerable, time-consuming work will have to be done to develop materials and legitimate the study of orature in the educational system. Thus in some cases, introducing certain aspects of African cultural studies will mean incremental changes to the curriculum while in others it will mean radical changes. With elements like the internet, widespread utilization is neither immediate nor even long term but speculative. These differences speak to the larger question I posed in the Introduction about whether English language and literature could be changed from within, rendered more political in order to deal

with "cultural studies-type" questions and issues, or whether there needs to be an actual transition to cultural studies. If there needs to be such a paradigm shift, can or should it be introduced incrementally, by making changes to the existing English language and literature studies curricula, or should it be introduced as a full-fledged, comprehensive subject that replaces literature studies (and drama studies)?

Is a Politicized, Utilitarian Literature Studies Possible?

Important work is being done to change English studies from within to make it more overtly political, more reflective of the concerns of previously marginalized groups (women, people of color, people in the Third World, gays and lesbians, etc.). In Chapter One of this book I attempted an albeit limited African project of remaking/politicizing literature. My conclusion was that while such a remaking is possible, the resultant discourse would in the end be inadequate for my purposes. Revisiting the work of Catherine Belsey (1980) and Deanne Bogdan (1990, 1992) has caused me to reflect on how and in what ways some reworkings of literature are more successful than others.

From my (re)examinations, I have concluded that the crucial factor for both these critics has been their insistence on working with(in) the discourses of literary criticism and literature studies, even as they push for reform and reconceptualization of those discourses. In Belsey's (1980) case, her notion of critical practice is juxtaposed with/situated within literary history: she traces the different approaches to meaning-making in literature through history and explains how each approach became dominant and how each consecutive approach constituted an important, viable shift from or improvement upon the last. Thus, while Belsey presents critical practice as a considerable improvement on preceding approaches, and therefore, in one sense, the *last word* in literary criticism, there is also a sense in which it is not outside literary history, and including it in that history renders critical practice the *latest word* in literary history. The implication, then, is that new theories and approaches will succeed critical practice, and literary praxis will continue to evolve and improve. In other words there is a sense in which, even as it pushes the bounds of what is possible in literary praxis, critical practice endorses, sustains, and contributes to literary praxis.

The same is true of Bogdan's work. In *Beyond Communication*, she and Stanley Straw (1990) push the boundaries of both reading comprehension and literary criticism by bringing together articles which bring out points

of convergence between the two usually discrete and divergent fields; and for good measure, they select pieces which obfuscate the usually rigid dichotomy between literary theory and literature pedagogy. These are quite radical measures which challenge many established traditions of literary praxis. This transgressive politics is underscored by the fact that the work is a collection of essays. In terms of the radical juxtapositions contained in the work, it would have been easier to dismiss a single text from Bogdan or Straw as the work of an isolated, eccentric individual. The collection illustrates that there is a veritable "community of scholars" (p. vii) whose work underscores and (re)produces these ideas and approaches. Also, in isolation and scattered in various journals, for example, each of these papers might have less impact and might not include one or more of the radical elements portrayed in the collection. What unites the diverse pieces in the collection is the fact that the contributors are united in operating within the "reader-response" approach to literary appreciation. This plants the individual pieces and the collection firmly within literary history and the contemporary discourse of both reading comprehension and literary criticism. Thus the radical juxtapositions and convergences between theory and pedagogy, reading comprehension and literary appreciation, are made without abrogating these individual categories or their individual histories and discourses or suggesting that the hybrid discourse produced through these juxtapositions constitutes a new, alternative discourse inside/outside the established ones it draws upon.

In *Re-Educating the Imagination*, Bogdan (1992) provides another example of working for change from within literary discourse. It is a work which at one and the same time endorses, extends, and challenges the tradition of literature education in general and the viability of Northrop Frye's (1963) notion of "the educated imagination" in particular. As Bogdan declares in her Introduction, "This book is a critique and defense of literature education. It attempts both to call into question the humanist underpinnings of the traditional claims of literature to instruct through delight and to incorporate and reconfigure those claims within their social and educational context" (Bogdan, 1992, p. xxi). Like Belsey, who provides a history of the evolution of meaning making in literary criticism and thus makes critical practice part of that historical development, Bogdan situates her work within the (western) historical traditions of literary criticism and literature education from Plato to Sidney and Shelley to Northrop Frye. While her primary objective in revisiting this tradition is to reexamine it and draw on it in developing her arguments in the rest of the work, this engagement with tradition serves more than as a

resource for developing an argument for engagement (as an approach to meaning-making and literature education). It also serves to endorse that tradition and to place Bogdan's work within it, rendering *Re-Educating the Imagination* part of the evolving discourse of literature education and literary criticism. Bogdan is not presenting these theories and frameworks as historical and anachronistic but rather is concerned, for example, with how Plato's notion that poetry can influence people not only for good but also for evil can be utilized seriously in addressing issues of the role of the poet and poetry in contemporary society. Thus, there is an aspect of endorsement and validation involved here, one which insists on the relevance of historical literary thinking to present-day issues.

Conversely, Bogdan also goes against the grain of these established, hegemonic theories and frameworks. For example, she insists that rather than being an answer to various problems in literature education, Frye's notion of the educated imagination should be considered an aspect of the metaproblem of literature education. Identity-based politics (especially feminism), the multicultural society, and poststructuralism, she holds, have rendered untenable the universalism on which Frye's notion of the educated imagination is grounded and have raised new questions which Frye's notion does not, indeed cannot, address, and there is a need therefore for "re-educating the imagination."

The two aspects of Bogdan's work (the endorsement, promotion, contribution to literature and literary education theory, on the one hand, and the challenging, reformulation, extension, and near rejection of that tradition, on the other) are not in the end contradictory. This is because Bogdan holds a consummate middle ground and is concerned with articulating an overall project of convergence rather than fragmentation and dissent. For example, she uses poststructuralism and postmodernism to reject universality and humanism and to problematize "the educated imagination," but she also rejects what she considers the "ontological bankruptcy" of most poststructuralist and postmodernist thinking. Also, while *Re-Educating the Imagination* deals with issues in the traditionally disparate areas of literary studies and English education, Bogdan also intends the work to contribute to the bridging of the traditional gap created and maintained between the two areas.

What the work of these two critics reveals is that it is possible to undertake radical, transformative work which enmeshes literature directly in current sociopolitical issues while operating firmly with(in) the discourse of literary and literature studies. By taking the literary tradition as given, they have illustrated that it is possible to "push the envelope" without bursting

through it. The basic difference between these critics and myself is that while they seem to take the literary tradition as given, I had already become quite disillusioned with that tradition and was looking for an alternative as I came to write even the early draft of my Chapter One. The conclusion I am forced to come to is that I did not have much faith that such work was viable or particularly significant politically. It is even possible that I was engaged more in writing myself out of literature than in reworking literature (as these critics have done). Even as I explored the possibilities of a utilitarian African literature studies, I was already convinced that the project was merely a stepping stone to something else, though I had not yet conceptualized that something else as African cultural studies.

Belsey and Bogdan's works have rejuvenated my enthusiasm for work that attempts to undertake change from within literature. This renewed interest has been buttressed through my e-mail discussions with Jackie Heslop who is editing a selection of papers from the conference on English: Pedagogy and Politics, Theory and Praxis (discussed in Chapter Two) for publication as a book. In her review of my paper, "In Defence of Transitions From English to Cultural Studies," Heslop (11 August 1995) pointed out that I had given rather short shrift to the work being done to change English from within, and this criticism caused me to reflect on the political importance of such work in relation to cultural studies. One of the advantages of working within the literary tradition is that it is particularly difficult for the forces of tradition to dismiss such work since it draws on and is firmly situated within the literary tradition. Cultural studies on the other hand can be dismissed as a parasitic, upstart discourse which (as I have pointed out in Chapter Two) is yet to be accorded wide acceptance in the academy. Second, changes within literature studies have the potential of immediate wide applicability in classrooms since literature studies is already a well-established, even central subject in the curriculum (especially at the university level). Third, if there is much that needs to change in English, then the changes should be made within the discourse of English: making a shift to cultural studies is in a way opting out, leaving the problematic aspects of English unchallenged, and thus contributing to the perpetuation of traditional hegemonic English studies.

In Defense of the Transition From Literature Studies in Africa to African Cultural Studies

This reconsideration of working for change from within English ought to mean that I would be less certain to come so readily to the conclusion that

the framework for African literature studies I develop in Chapter One is in the end the first few steps towards African cultural studies. This has not proven to be the case, however. While I believe that it is possible to undertake to produce a sustained, even book-length version of the framework for a utilitarian African literature studies that I sketch in Chapter One, and that such a project would be much more politically significant than I have previously allowed, I still believe the centering of performance and orature require that these forms be (re)colonized by print in order to fit comfortably into the discourse of literature studies. Allowing for performance and orature to retain their own aesthetic values and traditions and for them to be central in African literature studies does beg the question of whether such a form can continue to be called "literature studies." My answer continues to be an emphatic "no," and this means that arguing for the centering of orature and performance and the incorporation of electronic media (discussed in this chapter) entails arguing oneself out of the restrictions of literature studies into a new hybrid discourse that will not impose a print and literary hegemony on these other forms. However, this shift still leaves open the matter of what the new hybrid form is to be called and what theoretical, aesthetic framework could possibly contain it. The choice of cultural studies, made in Chapter Two, still seems to me the most appropriate.

As discussed in Chapter Two, however, the transition to cultural studies is not a panacea for the problems of literature studies in Africa. Some of the problems of literature studies, such as the prohibitive cost of materials for some communities, are in fact exacerbated with the prospect of African cultural studies, especially in terms of introducing and engaging electronic media. Other problems, such as the hegemony of Euro-America in the discourse of literature and literature studies and the constant need to articulate and fight for the legitimation of African versions of a discourse, are replicated in cultural studies, and similar battles need to be waged. What these and other factors mean is that there is a need to begin to articulate African cultural studies as I have attempted to do in Chapter Two, that is, both as an aspect of what could evolve as international or transnational cultural studies and also as a distinct form of cultural studies, one which is not formulated in the west and merely applied in Africa.

But why cultural studies? This question needs to be addressed in the face of my own constant question to those who espouse working for change within English studies, namely, why English? First, I believe this book has illustrated that cultural studies offers the kind of comprehen-

siveness and anti/interdisciplinarity which is particularly suited to studying African culture since it is the sort of approach reflected in many indigenous African education and knowledge systems (as discussed in Chapters Two, Three, and Four). The holistic approach to conceptualizing and disseminating knowledge is dominant in indigenous African systems, and thus the approach to cultural studies advocated here is anti-disciplinary but not necessarily interdisciplinary since many of the disciplinary boundaries, where they exist, are much more fluid and loosely formulated in indigenous African systems.

Second, the notion of artists and cultural workers playing multiple roles is one which is widespread in Africa. In the present chapter, I have given the examples of Ousmane Sembene and Mongo Beti, who are both filmmakers and fiction writers. Other examples include Soyinka and Ngugi, who are both writers and theater directors, and Achebe, Ngugi, Aidoo, and Soyinka who are both some of Africa's most prominent writers and also its most prominent literary critics. Thus, working in various, even disparate forms is already a reality for many African cultural workers, and there ought to be a system of study which can embrace these multiple facets and their interconnections instead of dealing with only one aspect (such as Soyinka's plays as literature) while neglecting the rest (his theatrical productions, his literary criticism, his political activism). These latter aspects are equally worthy of study in their own right and in interconnection with Soyinka's creative writing. They should not be taken up merely as background information which might help students of literature contextualize his plays.

Third, I insist in Chapter Two that my definition of cultural studies is an approach which takes the problem or issue to be addressed as central and then marshals the relevant material, theory, and so on that appears most relevant in addressing that issue/problem. In other words, in African cultural studies the issue drives the project rather than the project having to be addressed within the confines of the discourse or the issue rendered non-addressable because it appears to fall outside the purview of the discourse. For example, in African cultural studies, one is not already restricted to asking literature-type questions (as one is in literature studies) nor does one have to deal with constant revisions of entrenched theories and frameworks, since cultural studies is inherently dynamic and shifting and resistant (for the most part) to the entrenchment of particular theories, perspectives, and contributory disciplines as hegemonic. This utilitarian, issues-driven approach is what makes possible and viable the undertaking of the diverse utilitarian projects juxtaposing literature stud-

ies as cultural studies with issues of development studies (see Chapter Four), and the possibility of taking up film and e-mail as cultural studies texts as aspects of African cultural studies.

Fourth, the articulation of African cultural studies within/juxtaposed with the more established (western) discourse of cultural studies (see Chapter Two) and the articulation of the various sample projects in African cultural studies undertaken in the subsequent chapters illustrate that it is possible to articulate African cultural studies simultaneously as a unique form of cultural studies and as an aspect of international/transnational cultural studies.

Why Not Curriculum X?

While I am convinced that African cultural studies is both viable and utilitarian and would serve Africans better than the current literary-based literature studies and disparate film and drama studies, it must be conceded that there are other options. The literature option has already been discussed in Chapter One and in the present chapter and found wanting. Bill Green discussed another possiblity with me in a private conversation while he was in Toronto. He put forward and argued for what he called Curriculum X. He had articulated a new vision of the discourse of English studies in the talk he gave at OISE (Green, 1995), a vision similar in scope and comprehensiveness to what I am calling African cultural studies. However, he resisted the label "cultural studies" because he believed that while it was enabling in some ways, there were other ways in which it was restrictive and restricted. In our conversation he argued that cultural studies comes with something of a political thrust and certain ways of approaching texts which he believes might limit what he envisaged as the new curriculum, which would embrace written forms (literature), oral forms (orality in the classroom), and electronic forms (computers and the internet, television). As a label, Curriculum X suggests "the unknown curriculum," a curriculum yet to be defined and articulated. It therefore does not come with the baggage of an established discourse, and this opens up the possibility of avoiding not only the tyranny of print culture and literary discourse but also the emerging hegemony of cultural studies as a discourse.

While I am excited by the possibilities of Green's notion of Curriculum X, I still prefer the concept of African cultural studies. Green uses X to suggest an empty and therefore neutral category, one that would be filled in, given shape through the emergence of the new curriculum.

However, X is not necessarily an empty, neutral, pliant category. For me it raises and drags with it various alternative connotations including the radical Black politics associated with Malcolm X and the Black Muslim faith and movement and Generation X and the search for identity (by members of the generation and by others who would name and describe them in their own right and in relation to the preceding baby boomer generation). Thus while, ideally, Curriculum X should be conceptualized as an empty, neutral category waiting to be filled in as the emerging hybrid discourse emerges, it also can potentially be preconceived variously as a radical Black curriculum or as a curriculum devoted to issues concerning generation Xers. It could be argued of course that X is just one of many possible choices; that Green could well have chosen to refer to Curriculum Y or Curriculum Z. Nevertheless, the new, comprehensive curriculum Green envisages is potentially resistant to the tyranny of the printed word and literary approaches as well as to the discourse of cultural studies. However, in my view, this resistance comes at a high price since the new curriculum has no readily discernible theoretical and political framework to guide its evolution. I believe the albeit numerous and eclectic theories cultural studies draws upon, combined with the history and political and theoretical foundations of African literature and orature ensure that African cultural studies is constructed on a firm, discernible, theoretical base.

A third alternative would have been to suggest a number of discourses rather than African cultural studies as a singular comprehensive discourse. For example, is a discipline that simultaneously embraces film, television, radio, the internet, literature, and orature truly viable? Would it not have been more realistic to propose African media studies (involving all the electronic forms plus the print media) as well as African cultural studies (involving only literature and orature)? This question speaks to whether media studies is to be regarded as necessarily distinct from cultural studies or as an aspect of cultural studies. It also speaks to the fact that these various forms demand different skills and literacies. Paul Messaris's (1994) work clearly indicates that visual literacy is quite different from lay literacy, that performance entails creative skills which are quite different from the analytic skills demanded in criticism and meaning-making, and that the internet demands computer-related skills which have little relation to the skills demanded in cultural interpretation associated with orature. All of this adds up to a rather onerous and potentially conflicting number of skills to be learned, discourses to be immersed in, and approaches to take in the African cultural studies classroom.

However, the dichotomy created between certain forms and others in the literature studies/media studies divide is one I find regrettable since it precludes the serious investigation of various intersections between the various forms and the use of all of them in addressing important sociopolitical and cultural issues. What I propose, then, is not that there be various distinct discourses and subject areas but that there be an emphasis on different forms in different institutions and at various levels of study. This approach is already emerging as a reality in the example of the Centre for Cultural and Media Studies in Durban, South Africa (discussed briefly in the Introduction and Chapter One), at which the overall discourse is cultural studies, but the Centre's specialization and emphasis appears to be in media studies.

The Legitimation of African Cultural Studies

It is one thing to articulate a prescience of African cultural studies as I have done in this book and quite another to establish it as a viable, recognized, and operative discourse both in Africa and elsewhere. My speculation is that African cultural studies will be equally as "hedged" as cultural studies elsewhere once it is introduced into African educational systems. This is because it will face the same opposition from established, traditional disciplines in the academy where it will in all probability be seen as an upstart, usurping, encroaching discipline on the one hand and an all too comprehensive, unruly anti-discipline on the other. However, African cultural studies will likely attract professors and educators in general who already feel hemmed in by the often narrow confines of the individual disciplines in which they currently operate and who are in search of a more comprehensive discourse which will allow them to address issues that they currently cannot address because these issues fall outside the purview of their discipline or require them to encroach on other disciplines.

How then is African cultural studies going to be received in established cultural studies circles and in the western academy in general? I presented an earlier and much shorter version of my arguments for African cultural studies at a cultural studies conference in Toronto; it was well received and has been included in a special issue of the *University of Toronto Quarterly* on theoretical and praxis developments in international cultural studies. An earlier version of the arguments for evolving drama as cultural studies has been published in the *International Journal of Educational Development*; while an earlier version of the arguments on the potential contribution of literature studies to African development was presented at the Canadian

Association for the Study of International Development, (Wright, 1995) and has been published as a chapter in a book on indigenous knowledge (Wright, 2000). Finally, my argument that the works of certain African writers and cultural workers constitutes a heuristic form of cultural studies has been published in the cultural studies magazine *Border/Lines* and the academic *Review of Education/Pedagogy/Cultural Studies* (Wright, 1994, 1995). Furthermore two prominent cultural studies journals, the *European Journal of Cultural Studies* and the *International Journal of Cultural Studies* have published pieces on African cultural studies (Wright, 1998, Tomaselli, 1998) and another, *Cultural Studies*, is planning a special issue on African cultural studies. I believe all of these developments bode well for the legitimation of the various individual arguments and projects, and for the more comprehensive project and discourse of African cultural studies in the western and international academy.

African cultural studies will have to be legitimated not only in the academy but also in the streets and villages of Africa since, as I pointed out in Chapter Two, cultural studies is not merely an academic discourse but is performative and is to be found everywhere from cyberspace to the theater. African cultural studies should therefore include performance as discussed in Chapters One, Three, and Four. It must be recognized, however, that performance in and of itself does not constitute what Manthia Diawara (1992a) (discussed in Chapter Two) referred to as performative acts. Ngugi's work with the Kamiriithu Centre in Kenya is a model for performance which is also a performative act. It involved the development of a play, the issues involved in the play being topical and political, the construction of a theater, the production and performance of the play, and the addressing of a significant sociopolitical issue through the play. Thus Kamiriithu involved political statement, performance, and the study of theater and its relation to the surrounding world. Versions of African cultural studies should not only incorporate the various elements of the Kamiriithu model but should in at least some of its manifestations receive the same support and involvement from the local, non-academic communities.

One of the factors in favor of African cultural studies is the fact that many African countries are searching for ways to make education a more viable and meaningful way for African peoples to address their cultural, economic, and sociopolitical concerns. The pragmatism of African cultural studies will make it quite attractive to educators and governments in Africa. In Chapter Three, I document how cultural studies can make a significant contribution to progressive educational change in a specific African country, namely Sierra Leone. Drama as cultural studies, I argue,

would constitute a more progressive, African, integrated, and utilitarian genre than the current literary-focused, aesthetics-driven drama as literature, on the one hand, and theatre as extracurricular activity, on the other. In Chapter Four, I discuss how literature reconceptualized as cultural studies could contribute to the study and process of African development. In the present chapter I have dealt with the inevitability of the introduction of electronic forms into Africa and African studies, and I have provided a prescience of what it might mean to harness and utilize these forms in African cultural studies. All of these are the sort of practical measures that governments and curriculum developers will find attractive in their pragmatism and utility in terms of the issues facing Africa(ns).

There is much, therefore, that points to the viability of African cultural studies and its potential to emerge and be acknowledged as an aspect of inter/transnational cultural studies, as a progressive and utilitarian antidiscipline in African educational systems, and as a popular form of study of African culture and a means of addressing sociocultural and political issues facing Africa(ns). This book is not definitive and is not to be taken as a blueprint for constructing African cultural studies. Rather, I have set out here only to sketch the outlines of what one version of African cultural studies might be. While the version I articulate here is one which takes literature studies as its starting point, there could be many other entry points into African cultural studies, transitions from various other disciplines. While the projects I outline here reflect my particular interest in making changes to what I consider an ostentatious literature studies in Africa, many other projects drawing on both transitions from literature studies and from any number of other disciplines are possible. My hope is that African literature studies will develop into a discourse that contributes significantly to transnational cultural studies, progressive education in Africa, and the African-centered study of Africa and Africans.

Notes

Foreword

1. See my "The cultural studies' crossroads blues." *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 1 (1998), 65–83.
2. Bill Schwarz, "Where is cultural studies?" *Cultural Studies*, 8 (1994), 377–393.
3. Handel K. Wright, "Dare we de-centre Birmingham? Troubling the 'origin' and trajectories of cultural studies." *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 1 (1998), 3–56; also included in this volume.
4. See, for example, the "Dismantling Fremantle" issue of *Cultural Studies* (6–3, 1992). Also, "John Frow and Meaghan Morris, "Introduction" to Australian Cultural Studies (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993).
5. Handel takes a pan-Africanist position, while recognizing the uneven development of cultural studies in various parts of Africa and across the African diaspora.
6. Tony Bennett, *Outside Literature* (London: Routledge, 1990). Bennett, building on the work of Ian Hunter, sees literary study as a discourse that was brought back from the colonies to the colonizer.
7. I mean this to echo Deleuze's distinction between the virtual and the possible.
8. I take the term from Meaghan Morris.

Introduction

1. "Orature" is a term I shall use frequently in this book. Coined in the 1960s by Pio Zirimu, it refers to creative works in traditional or contemporary oral tradition. I distinguish it from creative works in writing, (literature), and take it up in this book as a category of creative form which is sometimes related to but always distinct from literature. Orature is not to be seen as preliterary creative work nor as inferior to literature. Rather, for African societies it is an equally if not more important category of creative work. For a fuller explication of the origin of the term, see Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1998).
2. I shall return to the works of both Belsey and Bogdan in the concluding chapter of this book because, in conjunction, they constitute elements of viable and interesting ways of creating a politicized literature studies, and hence, an alternative to the project being undertaken here of making a paradigm shift from "apolitical" literature

studies to an overtly political, African-centered, and utilitarian African cultural studies.

3. As Samir Amin (1992) has pointed out, the ghettoization of the African continent is a process that is already well underway in terms of international politics, economics, and communications. Much of Africa, he asserts, is no longer taken into account politically in the climate of the so-called new world order, and because of rapid technologization and the creation of zonal trading groups such as the European Economic Community (EEC) (now European Union (EU) and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), most of Africa is being kept at the level of producer of raw materials, while because of the same process of technologization, which Africa cannot afford, the continent is being increasingly marginalized in terms of communications.
4. Chinweizu et al.'s (1983) *Toward the Decolonization of African Literature*, for example, makes the case for a distinct, exclusive African literary praxis. However, the very rationale for such a discourse (i.e., breaking from the hegemony and colonization of the Eurocentric literary tradition) drags non-African traditions into the distinctly African tradition the authors propound. This is illustrative of the fact that a completely insular discourse is in fact impossible to achieve. My argument is therefore for the evolution of a distinct African literary discourse which integrates African literature, literary criticism, and literature studies, indeed African knowledge production in general, into what is globally taken up as worthwhile knowledge.
5. I have never been a particular fan of classical music. Perhaps this is a life-long subconscious rebellion against what I have always seen as the presumption of my parents in naming me after a German composer. In any case, I did find the combination of Rabindranath Tagore's poem "The Unsung Song" and the music Naresh Sohal composed for it in 1992 quite passionate and evocative when I attended the East/West evening of the 1993–1994 New Music Concerts in Toronto. I have kept the program from that night because of the emotive power the text/lyrics of the work still hold for me.
6. Even when Africa and Africans are taken up seriously in the west, for example, through academic associations such as the United States-based African Studies Association (ASA) and the Canadian Association of African Studies, Africa and Africans are represented in the majority of papers as being in a perpetual state of economic, social, legal, and moral crisis; as lagging behind in "development"; as being in need of paternalistic intervention from the west. Thus Africa is consistently and persistently conceived of and portrayed as a hodge-podge of countries and societies dancing on the edge of anarchy and anomie. Consequently the hegemonic approach utilized in the study of Africa and Africans is one which seeks to describe, critique, or provide solutions to Africa's supposedly endemic problems. This approach is so entrenched and so pervasive that it is taken-for-granted and has passed into common sense. It is utilized, therefore, not only by non-Africans but ironically by Africans themselves in our conceptualization and approach to addressing issues related to Africa(ns). At the concluding session of the 1994 ASA conference's teachers' workshop, participants were unanimous in their condemnation of what they recognized as the negative fetishizing of Africa and Africans at many of the conference's sessions.
7. I use "guilty" here as it is employed by Deborah Britzman (1990), that is, to acknowledge that my story (like every story) is a partial, biased, selective recollection and/or

interpretation of an event that, in poststructuralist terms, can never be told "innocently" and/or "truthfully."

8. As far as the issue of alienation is concerned, it is worth noting that, as Ira Shor (1987) asserts, "alienation is the number one learning problem, depressing academic performance and elevating student resistance" (p. 13). The alienation African students experience in relation to literature studies includes but extends beyond the relevance of the curriculum. It involves among other things an alien and alienating aesthetics, a foreign language, textbooks that are so prohibitively expensive as to be "out of reach," background cultural schemata they do not possess and cannot easily or readily acquire simply from reading more texts, and a culture of literacy that is at odds with the predominantly oral culture of their traditional and everyday lives.
9. Thelma Obah (1982, 1983) stresses that what she calls works of ethnic literature (i.e., locally written texts with local content, contexts, and language) are particularly important since students relate better to such works, understand and read them faster, and find them more interesting. Her main argument is that the literature curriculum in African schools is dominated by western texts and that there is not enough ethnic literature being taught.
10. Wright, H.K. (1987). *The reckless broom and virgin plots of lives: Change and traditional nigerian society in Wole Soyinka's drama*. M.A. thesis, University of Windsor.
11. The project was the Centre for Research into the Education of Secondary Teachers (CREST). It was through the ties between CREST, CIDA (the Canadian International Development Agency), and the faculty of education at Queen's University, Ontario, Canada that I was offered the opportunity to return to Canada to pursue a master's degree in Education at Queen's University.
12. Many African writers and critics (e.g., Soyinka, 1968; Izevbaye, 1971; Nkosi, 1981; and Onoge, 1985) have emphasized the functional nature of both African literature and African literary criticism. As Izevbaye asserts, "Many English-speaking African writers accept the notion that African art is functional...and therefore the concept of art for art's sake should not be allowed to take root in African critical thought" (p. 25). African critics in the diaspora have emphasized this notion of function also. Henry Louis Gates Jr. (1984), for example, observes that "the very act of writing has been a 'political' act for the black author" (p. 5).
13. In fact I wrote a review of Ngugi wa Thiong'o's (1993) *Moving the Centre*, in which I took up this collection of essays as an exercise in African cultural studies. See Wright, (1994). Also, see the somewhat expanded Wright, (1995). Would we recognize African cultural studies if we saw it? A Review Essay of Ngugi's *Moving the Centre: The Struggle for Cultural Freedom. Journal of Education/Pedagogy/Cultural Studies*, 17 (2), 157–165.
14. The first Festival Panafricain du Cinema de Ouagadougou (FESPACO) was held in 1969 and involved five African and two European countries. As Manthia Diawara (1992a) asserts, by 1985 "it had become the biggest cultural event in Africa, with thirty-three countries competing for the now prestigious Etalon de Yennenga award and several other prizes such as the ones conferred by the Organization of African Unity, UNESCO, the Institut Culturel Africain (ICA), the Agence de Cooperation Culturelle et Technique (ACCT), the Organisation Catholique Internationale du Cinema et de l'Audio-visuel (OCI), and the European Economic Community" (p. 128).

15. Alistair Coker, for example, is a regular contributor to both "LEONENET" and "SALONENET" of what he calls "Letter[s] from Africa." His "letters" are in fact either short reports on cultural events or reflective notes on historical events, or simply short stories. I undertake a fuller discussion of this phenomenon in the final chapter of this book.
16. Illustrative of this is the reaction of the reviewers and the editor of a journal to a manuscript I recently submitted for publication. I got a reply from the editor saying the reviewers unanimously liked the content of the manuscript but were also unanimous in their insistence that the "jazzy" subtitles of the sections and in particular the fact that I had chosen to write in the first person really detracted from the points I was making. They recommended the manuscript be rejected or that I do away with the jazzy subtitles and rewrite the piece in the third person. I spent some time thinking the situation through and decided in the end it was more crucial to be able to put forward my views on the issues I was addressing in the paper than not to get published because I wanted to insist on the legitimacy of my chosen style. Once I gave the subsections what I considered more plodding, academic titles and rewrote the piece in the third person, the piece was readily accepted and was published in the very next issue of the journal.
17. Molefi Asante (1987, 1988) takes the first route by producing two versions of his introduction to Afrocentricity, while in her early works bell hooks (1984, 1988b) takes the second by writing about often complex issues about the intersection of race, class, and gender in works that are academically rigorous yet quite accessible to a wide audience in terms of language. In her introduction to one of her collections of essays, hooks (1994) points out that her writing reflects a "progressive commitment to Left politics and a desire to write in a manner that would make my ideas accessible to a world beyond the academy" (p. 3), and points out that the collection "combines the many voices I speak—academic talk, standard English, vernacular patois, the language of the street" (p. 7).

Chapter One

1. Chantal Zabus (1995) has pointed out that such concepts as "translation," "transference" and "transmutation" are in the end woefully inadequate descriptions of the process undertaken by Tutuola and others in rendering texts conceptualized in the African tradition and expressed in English vocabulary while reflecting African structures and rhythms. In the end Zabus employs Loreto Todd's (1982) formulation—relexification—"the relexification of one's mother tongue, using English vocabulary but indigenous structures and rhythms" (Todd, 1982, p. 303) in her discussion of the issue of language in such works.
2. As I have pointed out in the Introduction, this is not to say that literature in the west is still universally "apolitical." Many overtly political approaches from feminist to Marxist to queer to Afrocentric criticism have been developed and are gaining increasing sway in the west. However, these developments still encounter considerable resistance and aesthetic driven "apolitical" approaches to literature still remain hegemonic. This situation contrasts somewhat with the African tradition with its emphasis on what I am calling a utilitarian approach (a notion similar to what Abiola Irele, 1990 has described as a pragmatic approach) to literary criticism.

3. In his discussion of different poems that would be accepted as poetry in America, Alan Wald (1989) identifies the same problem of the Eurocentric tendency to dismiss poetry which relies heavily on repetition. He points out that because EuroAmerican poetry passes for what constitutes American poetry, a poem like T.S. Eliot's "The Waste Land" qualifies as poetry because of its "complexity," while N. Scott Momaday's "Plainview: 2" with its simpler language and heavy reliance on repetition is likely to be dismissed as non-literary, even as non-poetry.
4. Chinua Achebe (1964, 1965) explicates the centrality and cruciality of this aspect of African aesthetics. Also, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin (1989) point out that "this insistence on the social role of the African artist and the denial of the European preoccupation with individual experience has been one of the most important and distinctive features in the assertion of a unique African aesthetics" (p. 125).
5. As Said (1989) puts it, "texts have ways of existing that even in their most rarefied form are always enmeshed in circumstance, time, place and society—in short, they are in the world, and hence worldly" (p. 18).
6. As Peter McLaren (1999) has rightly declared, "Long before his death on May 2, 1997, Freire had acquired a mythic stature among progressive educators, social workers, and theologians as well as scholars and researchers from numerous disciplinary traditions, for fomenting interest in the ways that education can serve as a vehicle for social and economic transformation" (p. 49).
7. Ola Rotimi's (1971) *The gods are not to blame* and Amos Tutuola's (1952) *The palm wine drinkard* are examples of a play and a "novel" that exemplify this technique.
8. James Weldon Johnson explained this idea quite clearly in making an early argument for an African American canon when he declared:

   > A people may be great through many means, but there is only one measure by which its greatness is recognized and acknowledged. The final measure of the greatness of all peoples is the amount and standard of the literature and art that they have produced. The world does not know that a people is great until that people produces great literature and art. No people that has produced great literature and art has ever been looked upon by the world as distinctly inferior. (quoted in Gates, 1990b, p. 97)

9. In speaking of canons and syllabuses as quite separate and distinct entities which are only related in that canonical texts can be included in a syllabus, critics like John Guillory (1991) appear to fail to grasp the complexity of the relationship between canons and syllabuses. More specifically, Guillory in particular does not acknowledge the role syllabuses play in perpetuating and even in establishing the canonicity of certain texts.
10. In March 1995, I was reminded of the dangers of labeling and the untenability of identifying and fixing people's multiple subjectivities when I attended the launch of Across Boundaries, an Ethnoracial Mental Health Centre established to serve ethnoracial communities in the Toronto area. One of the speakers, Siew Chin Chio, was introduced as Chinese, a lesbian, and a member of the Centre's executive board. She started her speech by insisting she was there to speak not so much as a board member but as the close friend of a mentally ill person who had committed suicide; further, she felt that since, in her view, the racism of Canadian society had contributed immensely to her friend's decision to end his life, she wanted to speak as a world majority person rather than as a Chinese woman, and she identified herself as bisexual rather than as a lesbian. She concluded this part of her opening remarks by say-

ing it is always dangerous to try to label or pigeonhole people and she would rather have been introduced by name only and allowed to say who she was and where she was speaking from herself.

11. For an alternative, off-hand identification of literary approaches, and his panning of most of these (which I will refer to in the ensuing discussion) see Wole Soyinka's (1988) "Ethics, Ideology and the Critic."
12. See Carole Boyce Davies and Anne A. Graves, (Eds.), (1986), *Ngambika: Studies of women in African literature*, Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press.
13. Mary Modupe Kolawole (1997) provides a rich discussion of this issue in the first chapter of her book, *Womanism and African consciousness*.
14. Needless to say, such arguments are usually put forward by male critics (e.g., Femi Ojo-Ade, 1982, 1983).
15. Chinua Achebe's (1988a) rereading of Joseph Conrad's *The Heart of Darkness* is an example of this type of criticism.
16. Niang's assertion that it is difficult if not wrong to speak of African literature has been echoed by some non-African critics. Ashcroft et al. (1989) for example have no hesitation in juxtaposing a neo-colonialist power like contemporary United States and neo-colonies like contemporary Nigeria together under the category "postcolonial," and further, speaking of the type of colonization Canada went through in the same breath as the type India went through in speaking of "formerly colonized countries." It seems to me that the diversity of "colonial" experiences this global hodgepodge of countries had, the unexplained exclusion of certain formerly colonized countries (e.g., China which was colonized by Japan) and the divergent statuses in contemporary times of the countries which are included makes classifying them all as "postcolonial" and their literatures "postcolonial literatures" extremely tenuous and problematic, far more so than the idea of speaking of literature from different African countries as African literature. I find it particularly ironic that Ashcroft et al. fail to interrogate the problematic notion of what they choose to identify as "postcolonial literatures" yet point to the much more viable notion of continental African literature as being problematic.
17. The politics of language is in fact a perennial issue in African literature. Even in the otherwise non-polemical special issue of African Literature Today on "The Question of Language," the editors, Eldred Durosimi Jones, Eustace Palmer, & Marjorie Jones (1991), touch on such politically charged issues as whether European languages can be made to convey aspects of African cultures, the use of pidgins and creoles, and the predicament of the African who tries to respond to the oppressor in the latter's language (especially when he/she does not have facility in that language).
18. Soyinka (1990) points out that the Yoruba use *enia dudu*, the Ga use *meedidzii* and the Hausa use *bailki mutane* to reference Black peoples.
19. The different ways in which Lebanese in Sierra Leone identify themselves, illustrates both the necessity and viability of treating such cases on an individual basis. Some Lebanese identify themselves as Sierra Leoneans and are well integrated into the mainstream Sierra Leonean community (through speaking indigenous languages, eating African food, having a network of indigenous Sierra Leonean friends, and sometimes even through marriage). Other Lebanese choose to maintain a distinct Lebanese identity (language, culture, etc.) and to associate (whether in business dealings, in friendships, or in relationships and marriage) virtually exclusively with other Lebanese in a distinct Lebanese community. There is even a Lebanese school (cov-

ering primary and secondary education) for the children of this group. While it may be possible to identify a Lebanese from the first group as African, it would be clearly problematic to say the same of someone in the second group.

20. African radical, self-preservative exclusivity is captured in the lyrics of the Ruthless Rap Assassins who declare: "You ask me why I keep to myself?

    Myself is all I've got cos you've got everything else
    When you're living on the edge
    You gotta do what you must
    Cause there ain't no justice, just us.

    Even within the Pan-African family, such work is already underway. Henry Louis Gates's (1988) *Signifying Monkey* is illustrative of the exciting work being done by Africans in the area of creating Pan-African theory of literary criticism.

Chapter Two

1. Lawrence Grossberg (1989a), for example, is reluctant even to define cultural studies and warns against attempts to rigidify and discipline the anti-discipline. When he does address the issue of what is and what is not cultural studies (see Grossberg, 1989b), he is decidedly cautious and carefully explains that his intention is not to draw and police boundaries around cultural studies.
2. Ngugi wa Thiong'o describes the work done at Kamiriithu in *Detained: A Writer's Prison Diary* (1981); in *Barrel of a Pen: Resistance to Repression in Neo-Colonial Kenya*. (1983a); and briefly in *Moving the Centre: The Struggle for Cultural Freedoms* (1993). In a chapter in Karin Barber's *Readings in African popular culture*, Ngugi (1997) concentrates on the role women played in the Kamiriithu project. The designation of the Kamiriithu project as cultural studies is mine.
3. See Manthia Diawara (1992b) "Black Studies, Cultural Studies, Performative Acts," *Border/Lines*, 29/30, (1993), 21–22. The notion of performative acts is an important aspect of this book and will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.
4. Samir Amin (1990) proposes, in *Delinking: Toward a Polycentric World*, that if Third World countries delink from the west (i.e., insist on negotiating loans and foreign aid on their own terms, taking into account their own priorities, and forgoing "assistance" if their terms are not fully considered), conditions would be created that would evolve a multiplicity of economic, political, and cultural centers and end the current global center/margin dichotomy. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1990) points out, in *The Post-colonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues*, that western societies have always designated others as marginal in order to establish and justify their own designation as central. She argues that in response Third World peoples need to "seize the centre." bell hooks (1984) asserts similarly in *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* that marginalized groups in EuroAmerica (she speaks of feminists in particular) have to work to end the marginalization of their concerns and projects in popular and academic discourses, in essence to move feminism "from margin to center."
5. In this sense cultural studies is received in much the same manner as critical pedagogy is received in mainstream education circles, that is, as a fringe, inscrutable, but somehow dangerous discourse that should be attacked, ridiculed, or at least actively kept at bay. The fact that as a sessional instructor I faced a whole class of graduate students of education, none of whom had ever even heard of the term critical pedagogy and a

class of some 35 third-year anthropology students at the University of Toronto, only 5 of whom had heard of cultural studies, attests to the active marginalization of these progressive discourses in mainstream academia.

6. Stuart Hall (1992) has discussed this situation in several pieces including "Cultural Studies and its Theoretical Legacies." Maureen McNeil (1994) gave a similar account in her presentation on "Cultural Studies and Its Institutions: Centre for Contemporary Studies, Birmingham University" at the Cultural Studies in Canada Conference, Toronto, May, 1994.
7. The questioning of taken-for-granted notions and the re-evaluation of commonsense concepts and "received truths," are central to the work of poststructuralist-influenced feminist literary/cultural critics such as Chris Weedon (1987) *Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory* and Catherine Belsey (1980) *Critical Practice*, as well as postmodernism-influenced educators working in the area of critical pedagogy and cultural studies such as Henry Giroux's (1992a) *Border Crossings: Cultural Workers and the Politics of Education*.
8. Michel Foucault (1981) puts forward this notion of strategic reversal in *The History of Sexuality, Volume One, an Introduction*. In *Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory*, Chris Weedon (1987) illustrates the significance of Foucaultian reversal in resisting hegemonic discourses and in creating enabling counter-discourses of human subjectivity.
9. Paul Gilroy's (1993) notion of the Black Atlantic (see *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*), is a reformulation of constructions of Black connectedness that suggest an African identity that includes Black peoples on the African continent and those in the diaspora. While such an expansive notion of African identity already exists in Pan-Africanism, Garveyism, and more recently, Afrocentrism, Gilroy's notion is significantly different from its precursors because it is premised not on an essential African identity but on a combination of Du Bois's notion of double consciousness and postmodernist-influenced notions of pastiche, hybrid identity.
10. Robert Morgan teaches at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education and made this statement in a private conversation I had with him. He is one of those critics and educators who work inside/outside English in that he still teaches and writes about literature but is increasingly involved in media and cultural studies. He has elsewhere indicated that for him the issue to be addressed is not literature per se but English studies, and in addressing what he appears to perceive as the virtual inevitability of English he has declared: "We cannot merely wish away English's circular hegemony in the interest of getting on with the future" (Morgan, 1993, p. 24).
11. This type of historicizing has tended to dominate western academic discourse in general, including accounts of both literature and also of the emerging anti-discipline of cultural studies. They concentrate on developments in EuroAmerica (and on occasion in Australia) with the result that they leave the impression that similar and parallel developments are not occurring in the Third World. For example, in direct contradiction with the supposed nebulous, non-linear and anti-disciplinary nature of cultural studies, accounts like Patrick Brantlinger's (1990) *Crusoe's Footprints: Cultural Studies in Britain and America*, Lawrence Grossberg's (1989b) "The Formations of Cultural Studies: An American in Birmingham," and Stuart Hall's (1980a) "Cultural Studies and the Centre: Some Problematics and the Problems" produce histories that either directly declare (as in the case of Brantlinger) or have been appropriated to make the case (as with Hall) that the Birmingham Centre was the singular and defin-

itive origin of cultural studies. The hegemony of EuroAmerican cultural studies (literally the hegemony of versions of cultural studies produced in the United States and England) is being challenged, however, either actively or through their very existence by such projects as the Dismantle Fremantle confest in Australia (see Ien Ang's 1992 "Dismantling 'Cultural Studies'? (by way of introduction)" for example); the existence of alternative centers such as the Centre for Cultural and Media Studies in Durban, South Africa; and the call for transnational cultural studies (see Alan O'Connor's (1993) "What is transnational cultural studies?"). I have attempted to add my voice to this chorus of ambivalence by putting forward not only examples of heuristic African cultural studies (see Wright, 1994a "Dare We Call This African Cultural Studies?") but also an African account of the origin of cultural studies (see Wright, 1998, "Dare We De-Centre Birmingham? Troubling the Origin and Trajectories of Cultural Studies," and Wright, 1996 "Take Birmingham to the Curb, Here Comes African Cultural Studies").

12. The idea of situating oneself inside/outside literature is put forward by Tony Bennet (1990) as the productive space from which the limits of literature can be recognized and identified. Asking what literature is from within the discourse yields ready-made literary answers, and stepping outside the discourse (an improbable position, since once one engages literature the discourse imposes itself on one's examination of it) yields only an outsider's perspective.
13. Bolakaja literally means "come down and fight." Thus bolakaja criticism is underscored by an aesthetics of radical African assertiveness and resistance to co-optation and marginalization.
14. Much of Henry Louis Gates's work on African American literature is underscored with an acute awareness that African literary production (continental and diasporic) is inherently political. He makes the argument overtly in Gates (1984), "Criticism in the Jungle."
15. See Wright (1994a), "Dare We Call This African Cultural Studies? A Review of Ngugi's *Moving the Centre: The Struggle for Cultural Freedoms*." Also see Wright (1995b), "Would We Recognise African Cultural Studies if We Saw It? A Review Essay of Ngugi's *Moving the Centre: The Struggle for Cultural Freedom*."
16. Reaction to the talk given by Costas Criticos (of CCMS) at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) in 1992 is illustrative. First, the vast majority of students and faculty (myself included) were hearing of the existence of both cultural studies in Africa and of CCMS itself for the first time. Second, discussion was conducted with the presumption that cultural studies as a full-fledged (EuroAmerican) discourse was being applied in South Africa. Third, apart from my own efforts to keep abreast of the work being done at CCMS and one faculty member's continued connection with Costas Criticos, there has been virtually no further link with CCMS or even discussion of cultural studies in Africa at OISE.
17. A heuristic cultural studies approach is suggested in the very title of Wole Soyinka's *Art, Dialogue and Outrage: Essays on Literature and Culture*. The work itself, like Ngugi wa Thiong'o's (1993) *Moving the Centre: The Struggle for Cultural Freedoms* incorporates an integration of discussions of literature and high and popular culture. Adewole Maja-Pearce's (1991) *Who's Afraid of Wole Soyinka? Essays on Censorship* is a liberal critique of government censorship of the press in West Africa which also explores how the muting of the press is linked with general government repression and how these factors impact on ordinary people's lives. Although Chinua Achebe's (1988b) *Hopes*

and Impediments: Selected Essays 1965–87 is for the most part a series of essays on literature, it contains elements such as Achebe's ruminations on the role literature can play in promoting African development which make it at least unconventional as a literary text and in my view qualify it to be considered a cultural studies text. Of all these figures only Ngugi makes an explicit reference to cultural studies in his work and even in his case the reference is distinctly perfunctory.

18. See Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, (1993b) "Scattered Speculations on the Question of Cultural Studies"; Alan O'Connor (1993) "What Is Transnational Cultural Studies?" 46–49; and Kuan-Hsing Chen (1992) "Voices From the Outside: Towards a New Internationalist Localism."
19. "Confests" like Dismantle Fremantle in Australia in June 1991 (see *Cultural Studies*, 1992) and the Visual Voice Festival held in Durban, South Africa, in June 1994, not only offer exciting alternatives to traditional academic conferencing but have the potential to avoid replicating what bell hooks described as "the terror of marginalization" (1992, p. 286) created by the traditional format adopted at the international conference "Cultural Studies Now and in the Future" at the University of Illinois. (See hooks's contribution to the "Discussion" of Stuart Hall's "Cultural Studies and Its Theoretical Legacies" in Grossberg, Nelson, & Treichler (eds.) *Cultural Studies* , pp. 286–294).
20. Communication between people doing cultural studies in Latin America and people in South Asia undertaking subaltern studies led to the formation of the Latin American Subaltern Studies Group. For documentation of this development, see Latin American Subaltern Studies Group (1993). Founding Statement. *Boundary* 2. 20 (3), 110–121.
21. As Spivak (1990) has pointed out, "A program of deconstruction can't be followed....It is not itself a counter-program for the production of knowledge." (p. 47). However, it can serve, as she allows, to keep one reflexive, constantly questioning what or whose knowledge and perspectives are left out of the knowledge one is engaged in producing or disseminating, and whether and how one is being co-opted by more powerful forces (e.g., into accepting the call to provide the marginal voice that legitimates the central discourse).

Chapter Three

1. The semi-professional groups represent the highest level of professionalism in theater in Sierra Leone since the money involved in the theater business cannot sustain professionalism.
2. *Modenloh* (*Mother in Law*) is a musical about how a marriage becomes rocky when the husband's mother comes to live with the couple. *Wan Paun Flesh* (*A Pound of Flesh*) is a Sierra Leonean adaptation (in Krio) of Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*. Both plays were written by members of Tabule and like many excellent local works, they remain unpublished.
3. It is important to point out that the drama club and drama as theatrical performance were purely extracurricular activities, rather than part of the established curriculum. We met and rehearsed after school. The benefits of participating in theatrical productions I describe here could have been shared by many more students if drama as theater had been a part of the regular curriculum. Even when drama as theater is inte-

grated into the curriculum, however, it is often regarded as an enrichment activity and when there are budget constraints, it is one of the first aspects of "the arts" to be abandoned by schools (Doyle, 1993).

4. For a particularly comprehensive examination of the various uses to which theater was, is, and can be put in the African context, see David Kerr's (1995) *African Popular Theatre*.
5. Literally translated, *Poyoton Wahala* means Trouble in Palm-Wine Town. Since palm-wine bars in cities are traditionally frequented by alcoholics and shifty, unemployed ne'er-do-wells, the very title of the play was meant to suggest that Sierra Leone was being led by a bunch of inept, depraved drunks.
6. Although censorship of the theater was a serious problem, the situation I describe pales in comparison to that in certain other African countries. Rose Mbowa's (1994) "Artists Under Siege," gives an indication of how serious things were for those involved in the theater in Uganda during the 1960s and 1970s.
7. The theater was not the only space that became overtly radicalized during this period. Nightclubs such as Countdown and Victoria, which were frequented by university and senior high school students, also became sites of protest. These nightclubs were open in the afternoon during weekends and it was at these afternoon sessions that heated discussions over pints of beer helped shape our politics. One reggae song in particular, "*Changes*," became a theme song of politicized youths in Sierra Leone. Its refrain was as follows:

   The system dread,
   I say change it.
   The system bad,
   I say change it.
   The people dem sad,
   I say change it.
   The youth dem getting mad!
   Change it, rearrange it!

   The government banned the song from being played on the radio. Police increased "riot patrols" in the neighborhood where Countdown, which was the nightclub considered the hotbed of student rebellion, was located.
8. For a sustained examination of African theater in the context of national and continental politics, see Jane Plastow's (1996) *African Theatre and Politics*. Also, see the essays in Liz Gunner's (1994) *Politics and Performance*.
9. In this sense my project is similar to Clar Doyle's (1993). However, where she was concerned with developing drama as a site for undertaking critical pedagogy, I am concerned with developing a critical pedagogy for drama studies in the first instance, and second, and more comprehensively, with taking up drama as an aspect of cultural studies.
10. General Certificate of Education "O" and "A" Levels are roughly equivalent to grades 12 and 13 in the Canadian system.
11. In an interview I conducted with Michael Green (Wright, 1999), Green indicated that there have been attempts in England to introduce cultural studies in the secondary school curriculum. Although media education/studies is being undertaken, attempts at introducing cultural studies as a distinct, explicitly named secondary school subject have been unsuccessful.

12. I use experience here in the sense that it is employed by Simon (1987), that is, to mean "the conscious and unconscious thoughts and feelings, images and memories which realize one's sense of self, others and our material environment in such a way as to constitute possibilities of existence." In particular I refer to the part education plays in determining our subjectivities. In my view, experience should neither be ignored nor merely celebrated and romanticized in the classroom. Rather, it is to be incorporated, engaged, interrogated, and transformed in ways that enable students to develop a concern for democracy and social justice.
13. The centrality of drama and orality in Black creativity, theorizing, and everyday life is being acknowledged not only on the African continent by Ngugi (1986), Okpewho (1992), and others, but also in the African diaspora by African Americans like Baker (1984), Gates (1988), and Jones (1991).
14. Some popular theater advocates (e.g., Mwansa, 1985; Eskamp, 1989) make significant distinctions between different forms of theater for "the masses." In the broadest sense, they distinguish between popular theater (theater appealing to a wide audience and with social change as its goal) and populist theater (theater that appeals to a broad audience which takes mass appeal and entertainment rather than social change as its primary goals). I have therefore come to the conclusion that both popular and populist theater exist in Sierra Leone. I have reservations about clear-cut distinctions between these forms, however, especially in the Sierra Leonean context. For the sake of simplicity, therefore, I am using popular theater as a comprehensive term that embraces both popular and populist theater.
15. My father tells how he and his classmates had to sit the same Junior and Senior Cambridge examinations as British students, and how they were taught nothing about Sierra Leone but sweltered in the tropical heat as they were taught all about the four seasons that constitute the "temperate clime of the British Isles."
16. This reverence for education is captured in the Krio saying, "Befoe mi pikin nor go school, na eat we nor go eat." Roughly translated (and much of the passion and determination underlying the saying is lost in translation), the saying means "[no matter how little money we have] I would rather have my whole family starve than not pay for my child's education."
17. See Wright (1993a), "What Is Shakespeare Doing in My Hut? "A" Level Literature and the Sierra Leonean Student," *Canadian and International Education*, 22, 66–86.
18. The extract is from one of several interviews that made up the data for my study, "What is Shakespeare Doing in My Hut? "A" Level Literature and the Sierra Leonean Student" (Wright, 1993a).
19. I have put ~~literature~~ under erasure here because the word is restrictive, inadequate, and in the end inaccurate when applied to what I envisage will emerge from the integration of orature, performance forms, and written texts in the Sierra Leonean context. I use literature as a synonym for a cultural studies approach to literary and performance texts.
20. Spivak (1990) has asserted that the notion that the center and the margin are fixed is false. As she put it:

    > In a sense I think there is nothing that is central. The center is always constituted in terms of its own marginality. However, having said that, certain peoples have always been asked to cathect the margins so others can be defined as central. (p. 40)

Since the location of certain groups at the center is a construct, it is time for so-called globally marginalized groups, including Sierra Leoneans, to seize the center, to look toward their own cultures and societies for validation, to work toward developing their societies according to their own traditions (while trying to ensure that they eliminate the problems inherent in their traditional and modern ways) instead of applying the hegemonic western standards, to create alliances among themselves and so gain greater global power and thereby contribute to the evolution of a truly post-modern world.

21. It is important to note that, even though many African cultures place great emphasis on the community, this does not mean that individuals do not have rights or that individualism is not an important aspect of community life. The traditional emphasis on community can be and is sometimes appropriated and deliberately misconstrued by more powerful groups and individuals in contemporary society to justify oppression of minorities and usurp individual rights, uses to which communualism was never meant to be put.
22. At the "A" level, for example, biology and chemistry are considered complementary, as are economics and accounting. English language and literature in English are considered complementary at "O" level, but English literature tends to be considered a generic arts subject at "A" level, one which has no natural complement. African drama as cultural studies would be a logical complement to "A" level literature.
23. A direct translation of the saying would be "do not remove the piece of bread from my mouth unless you intend to replace it with a cookie."

Chapter Four

1. In terms of the literary and popular, Harriet Hawkins's (1990) *Classics and Trash* epitomizes this cultural studies project in terms of links between "high literature" and popular genres. Taking up George Bernard Shaw's declaration that all normal people need both classics and trash, Hawkins obfuscates the distinctions between works of "high literature" and popular works by pointing to their fascinating overlaps and similarities. The result is such intriguing (and for literary purists, disturbing) chapters as "From 'King Lear' to 'King Kong' and Back: Shakespeare and Popular Modern Genres" and sections of chapters like "'High Literature' and *Gone With the Wind*: The Stress on Sameness."
2. The essay is included in a collection of Achebe's (1988b) literary criticism titled *Hopes and Impediments*.
3. This point was underscored for me when I presented a paper (Wright, 1995a) about the same topic at the 1995 meeting of the Canadian Association for the Study of International Development. One audience member told me she was quite taken aback by the juxtaposition of literature and development studies. She pointed out to me that she had been a teacher of literature for many years and now worked in development studies, and it would never have occurred to her that any plausible, let alone viable and productive, link could be made between the two fields.
4. Although Achebe argues against a conceptualization of modernization as synonymous with westernization, the example he uses to launch this argument (a quote from a Japanese professor) is curious since it reflects the very confluence of modernization and westernization he is arguing against:

> My grandfather graduated from the University of Tokyo at the beginning of the 1880s. His notebooks were full of English. My father graduated from the same university in 1920 and half of his notes were filled with English. When I graduated a generation later my notes were all in Japanese. So...it took three generations for us to consume western civilization totally via the means of our own language. (Kinichiro Toba, quoted in Achebe, 1988b, p. 110)

Without the last sentence the quotation could have been used effectively to endorse the argument that modernization in Japan was undertaken simultaneously with a process of rediscovery and strengthening of elements of traditional Japanese culture. Thus, the example could have been said to give the lie to the notion that modernization and westernization are synonymous or inextricably linked processes. However, the last sentence indicates that Toba considers Japan to have been engaged not merely in a process of modernization but in a process of consuming western civilization in the process of modernization.

5. Achebe does not make a case here for taking up traditional African stories and parables as literature. Rather, he takes them up as such in a matter-of-fact, taken-for-granted manner. This is in itself, in my opinion, a bold and strategic move involving the legitimation of traditional African stories as orature (or as Achebe prefers, oral literature).
6. It is interesting that even though Achebe takes up traditional proverbs and fables as "literature," he does not integrate these forms with African "literary" texts. This refusal to juxtapose, let alone integrate orature and more traditionally defined literature is a limitation of Achebe's redefinition of literature. It illustrates that while a redefinition of literature makes it possible to put forward oral literature as a field within literature, it does not facilitate the integration of that field into the traditionally insular notion of literature. It takes a redefinition of literature as an aspect of cultural studies, in my view, to facilitate a juxtaposition or integration of orature and literature. Although elements of the essay qualify it to be considered as heuristic cultural studies, the distinction maintained between literature and orature is an indication that Achebe is still operating within literature (rather than consciously and systematically attempting to make a transition to cultural studies).
7. Achebe does not articulate a distinction between the two concepts and in fact later uses them virtually interchangeably in the chapter. What can be discerned, however, is a general discomfort with the restrictions of development (as economistic) and a desire to operate within a more expansive discourse, hence a preference for modernization.
8. Sachs and Dei are not necessarily far apart in their positions. The difference between them is that while Sachs is ready to abrogate the term and practice of development, Dei, it would appear, cannot in practical terms endure the vacuum that would be created in the interim and would therefore rather work to change development from within.
9. The reference here is to cultural studies as an interdisciplinary field of studies.
10. In fact my preference for the term *orature* rather than *oral literature* reflects my conviction that oral literature drags too much of the baggage of literature with it, to the extent that it is in the end a form of literature. Orature on the other hand connotes for me a distinct form, one which necessitates a distinctly different approach and framework of appreciation and application.

11. The schism that exists between indigenous educational systems and modern, Eurocentric education is not only a matter of educational concern but also of vital sociocultural and communal concern. One of the results of modern education is the displacement of traditional teachers, the loss or devaluation of traditional values, and the creation of a schism between older and younger generations. The following quotation from a Dinka chief (quoted in Deng, 1980) speaks to all these issues:

    > Educated youth have pushed us aside saying that there is nothing we know. Even if an elder talks of the important things of the country, they say, "There is nothing you know." How can there be nothing we know when we are their fathers? Did we not bear them ourselves? When we put them in school, we thought they would learn new things to add to what we, their elders, would pass on to them. We hoped they would listen to our words and then add to them the new words of learning. But now it is said that there is nothing we know. This has really saddened our hearts very much. (pp. 106–107)

    What Dinka elders had hoped for, therefore, was a happy marriage of the distinct systems of education. Instead, western-influenced schooling has rendered made both the elders and traditional education redundant. Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1981) is one African literary and cultural figure who has called for the introduction of traditional knowledge into the educational system. What I am proposing here is a concrete measure that could be implemented that would not only lend complimentarity between the two systems but would actually mean the integration of elements of traditional education into formal schooling.
12. This is not to say students should not also be encouraged to perform orature in class, nor that their performances could not be recorded, also to be shared with others in the community and beyond.
13. This account is summarized in Kipusi (1992).
14. In many African countries, small-scale development projects called self-help projects were promoted by governments and became very popular in the 1980s. The rural communities involved provided the labor and invested or raised much of the funding for such projects.
15. I had always considered Ong's (1982) *Orality and Literacy* as a very progressive text, one which brought out some of the limits of literacy and the loss of orality's special gifts once literacy is embraced. I also regarded it as progressive for its serious and systematic examination of the strengths of orality and its viability as well as its influence on the literate world. I came face to face with the limits of the text when I included it in a third-year anthropology course on orality. Once I put the text in the context of the points I was trying to make, about orality not necessarily being a precursor to literacy but a medium that should be considered as existing simultaneously with literacy, the viability of orality in and of itself, and the reality of how colonized we all become by print (to the detriment of serious consideration not only of orality but also of visual and electronic literacy), I found myself arguing against the text in my lectures and discussions with the students. In the end we examined the text in terms of the limits of attempting to appreciate orality and compare it to literacy while being firmly situated in (colonized by?) literate culture.
16. The authors define "facipulation" earlier in the work as a combination of facilitation and manipulation.

Chapter Five

1. This title is adapted from Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's (1993b) essay, titled "Scattered Speculations on the Question of Cultural Studies."
2. While the BBC has covered the war in Sierra Leone sporadically, in North America there has been a veritable dearth of coverage of the war.
3. The Krio phrase "den say" [this is what is being said; I hear that] is used in such accounts and while it could mean that there might be some truth to such an account, it usually suggests that what is being reported is nothing but idle gossip.
4. "Sobel" is a combination of "soldier" and "rebel" and is used to describe a soldier who has deserted the army and either joined the rebels or has become a bandit with a uniform and gun; such "sobels" rampage through the villages, looting and robbing and in many instances cases killing people.
5. Muana does not give an indication of whether soldiers in the regular army take such drugs and whether they have a different name for drugs, but Coker's (24 April 1995) story at the start of this chapter would indicate that drug taking is not limited to the RUF.
6. There are reports that mercenaries from Burkina Faso are fighting on the RUF side and this explains the naming of the rebel stronghold after that country.
7. This sense of conversation and immediacy is heightened through a process such as "MOOing," which involves a program that allows multiple messages to be sent at very fast speeds; participants in a MOO session can therefore send and receive messages virtually instantaneously. The result is that it is possible to have what amounts to a "conversation" between people from all corners of the world. Such sessions have to be brief, however, and be well synchronized by the participants. While LEONENET has yet to hold a MOOing session, another list I subscribe to, POSTCOLONIAL, has held one such session, which I did not participate in since I found the instructions too complicated and the timing inconvenient. The session was initiated by Ryan Schram (28 July 1995) and it drew both enthusiastic response from some netters and dissent, even accusations of Americacentrism, from others. Peter Stewart (10 August 1995), for example, pointed out that the time scheduled for the MOO session was very convenient for netters in North America but very inconvenient for people like him who were located in Australia.
8. Here I am suggesting the notion of "the net as gathering place" as a parallel to Adams's (1992) notion of "television as gathering place."
9. URTNA is an acronym for the Union of National Radio and Television Organizations of Africa. Founded in 1962 by the Organization of African Unity, URTNA counts 40 African countries as its members.
10. The gross underrepresentation of Sierra Leoneans in Sierra Leone on LEONENET is directly attributable to the fact that the price of opening an e-mail account in Freetown has reportedly been set at $300 American (more than one month's salary for the average university professor). When Coker stopped posting his highly successful letters to LEONENET it was speculated on LEONENET that this was because the price of sending and receiving e-mail had been increased. Jeffrey Cochrane (27 April 1995), an American undertaking research in Sierra Leone at the time, pointed out in his somewhat overly optimistic speculations about the possibility of the spread of the internet in Sierra Leone that "It is technically feasible for anyone in Sierra Leone to access any Internet service tomorrow. Every innovation, every

bell and whistle, is available—for a price....perhaps as little as $90 an hour. For a larger investment in infrastructure, and with a larger user base, the costs per user can be reduced substantially." As a Sierra Leonean I knew that $90 was about the equivalent of a primary school teacher's monthly salary at the time.

11. His information was from a preliminary program and there was every likelihood, therefore, that the number of sessions could increase by the time the program for the conference (which was to be held later in the year) was finalized.
12. The reference here is to the new educational system to which Sierra Leone is moving. The old system involved seven years of primary education and five years of secondary schooling (or seven years if the student opted to do two years of sixth form) and four years of university (or three years of teachers' college or, if the student had good enough grades at the end of sixth form, to enter a three-year university program). This was the 7–5–4, system or more accurately, the 7–5 (or 7)–4 (or 3) system. The new system involves a more straightforward, uniform six years of primary school, three years of middle school, three years of high school, and four years of university (or three years of teachers' college), hence "the 6–3–3–4 educational system."
13. "Bollywood" is the name given in Indian popular parlance to the film industry in India. Because one of the primary centers of the film industry is Bombay, this city is thought of as the Indian equivalent of Hollywood, hence "Bollywood."
14. In fact, in the case of orature and performance it was not really a question of marrying cinema to these forms since, as critics like Pierre Haffner (discussed in Diawara, 1989) have asserted, African film grew out of African theater.

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Index

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