

## CHALLENGING THE MASTERS AND BREAKING THE JINX: THE PIONEER THEATRE WOMEN IN FOCUS

Dr. Ngozi Udengwu  
Dept of Theatre and Film Studies  
University of Nigeria, Nsukka  
08034715635  
[ngozi.udengwu@unn.edu.ng](mailto:ngozi.udengwu@unn.edu.ng)

What is obvious when one takes a look at the theatre scene today is the presence of women in almost every aspect of the profession, working as script writers, directors, managers, designers, actresses, trainers, and so on; in both mainstream and fringe theatre spaces including the film. The present freedom to participate in whatever aspect of the theatre of their choice, which women are enjoying today, was not always there. In fact it was a long fought battle before women could emerge in theatre, having been banned from it for many centuries in almost every part of the world.

This paper, therefore, is an historical overview of the emergence of women in theatre, no longer as objects of artistic expression but as artists themselves; no longer the silent consumers of artistic products but producers of meaning themselves. The paper is divided into three sections to cater for three selected stages of development as they affect women in theatre. The first section is drawn from traditional theatre, with focus on masquerade in Nigeria and Kabuki theatre in Japan; second section looks at the emergence of actresses in commercial theatre in Nigeria, England and Japan; while the third section discusses the emergence of women in playwriting, with focus on the pioneer female playwrights in Germany and Nigeria.

The main focus is on how women were able to rise above obstacles to make their mark on the sand of time as it concerns the expressive art of theatre.

### **Traditional Theatre – Masquerades: The Founding Mothers**

Theatre and performance seem to have started with the art of masquerades in most parts of Africa. One of the major characteristics of masquerade cult is the absence of women. Scholars who have written on masquerade all reveal that masquerade is a male business which women are barred from entering, unless to serve some peripheral duties. Writing about masquerades in Igboland, Augustine Onyeneke (1987), declares;

The masquerade serves the special function of differentiating the male from the female in Igbo society. Everywhere it is the exclusive function of the male while the females are always excluded even where a female character is portrayed in the masking. (78)

This view is corroborated by other writers in that performance genre – E. J Alagoa (1967), Abimbola Ademola Ojomo (1983), Onuora Nzekwu (1981), Nnabuenyi Ugonna (1983) who gave reasons why women are banned from playing the masquerade. One of

the reasons is that masquerade business requires the ability to keep top secrets and women lack that virtue. Masquerades are thus shrouded in secrecy in some societies. What exactly are they hiding, from who and why? One wonders.

Onyeneke goes ahead to clarify that in some cases, however, some women are chosen to play supporting roles like singing in the chorus, and that is the only time they are allowed to come close to the masquerade, outside that they are expected to run like other women and uninitiated members of the society. Some other time too, women are initiated, but, according to Onyeneke, "these have to be women whose probity is assured on the word of many trustworthy masquerade members" (78). He quickly adds that,

Even so they have no right to salute a masquerade in public. They are not expected to run away at the sight of a masked spirit, but they must keep out of the way in all deference (79)

What have not been widely acknowledged is the fact that women were founders of these masquerades. This has been revealed in some research reports and it raises the red flag on certain gender claims, especially about the absence of women from masquerade performances. Interestingly, Bess Reed (1998), who carried out a research into masquerading in Old Anambra State between 1993 and 1994 noted that "Among Igbo people in Southern Nigeria, women and masquerades are separated through series of prohibitions and restrictions" (71) and she wanted to find out why. But all the women she interviewed said they had no idea why women were excluded from the masquerade. Women are aware of the reasons proffered to justify their exclusion from the masquerade. For them to say they had no idea may mean that they did not know any good reason for it, having regarded the existing explanation as senseless; it may even mean that they simply did not care. Reed's report which appeared in *African Arts* of Spring 1998, raised my interest in this matter for the first time, because, like these respondents to Reed's interview, i have always waved aside all the myths about why women should not play the mask and how the masquerades are the spirits of dead ancestors who sneak out from ant holes to participation in festivals organised by humans.

Having seen how Reed's line of questioning had hit a dead end, i decided to formulate my own research question. I asked some women, irrespective of age the same question, "Would you like to play the masquerade if permitted?" The answer each time was "no" except for one woman, a bank manager and a wife and mother who said yes. She explained that as a little girl she had always wanted to join her brother in wearing the mask, but her father had always scolded her saying it was a taboo for a girl to wear a mask. But I was not talking about child fancies. As children we had wanted to do what our brothers did but were prohibited.

With the possibility that women do not even want to engage in the masquerade poses a problem in understanding the actual reason for their absence from masquerade performance. Are women banned from masquerade or did they opt out of it on their own

free will, is the question that begs for answers. A look at the origin of most major masquerades in Nigeria may hold the answers. In his study of Delta masquerades, E. J. Alagoa (1967), informs us that Sekiapu masquerades, unlike many of their counterparts in other parts of Nigeria, have nothing against women nor do they "terrorize the populace". It is not only that women form the main audience for the masquerade performances, but,

Further all the myth of origin concerning Sekiapu and individual masks relate how women first saw the plays in the mangrove swamps and creeks being performed by the water spirits and taught them to the men. In some cases even the sculptural head pieces are related to have been brought from the land of the water spirits (Owuama) by women (146).

Alagoa's next exposé raises more questions than answers, for he goes ahead to reveal that daughters of the founding members of Sekiapu masquerade performance are accepted as honorary members of the cult assigned the duty of "weeding the club ground" (147). Yet Sekiapu, irrespective of its female origin, is now a patriarchal status symbol exclusively for accomplished individuals and a stamp of manliness and non-members are regarded as either uncircumcised males or, more ironically, "women". It is important to note that the women who received the knowledge did not use it but transferred it to the men. This means that for some reason they did not want to engage in it.

In another account, Egun Okesola (1967), who wrote on Agbo Festival in Agbowa, explains that Agbo masquerade performance was introduced into Agbowa by a woman named Efunpokun who was married to an Iwopin man. Agbo masquerades were a group of six masquerades, three males and three females associated with the worship of the goddess, Agbo. When Madam Efunpokun returned to her hometown, Agbowa, she told the elders about it. Now, women are not allowed to enter the grove though they can receive the men when they come out.

Abimbola Ademola Ojomo (1983) in his doctoral research did a comparative analysis of masquerade performances in Yoruba, Efik and Ibibio and reports that, "Infact, there is evidence to the effect that in the three societies under study, women had a pristine association with the practice".

Traditional theatres, in Nigeria and elsewhere, seem to be notorious in edging out women from the performances they founded, not only in Nigeria or Africa, but elsewhere in the world. The most popular traditional Japanese theatre named Kabuki, like its counterpart in Nigerian masquerade theatre, is an all-male cast with male impersonators (called *onnagata*) playing the role of women. Interestingly, the origin of Kabuki performance in Japan is traced back to a shrine maiden named Okuni of Izumo whose physical beauty and grace of movement gave birth to Kabuki theatre in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century. She later ran away from her Shinto temple and built a theatre in Kyoto. Her former religious chants

gave way to popular folk songs and she engaged other women in her theatre while she acted men's roles. At that early stage it was called Onna Kabuki. Frank Lombard reported that by 1603 – 1604, Okuni had reached the height of her popularity and had established stages in various parts of the city. Though plays were designed for audiences of common folks, the nobility were soon attracted to it leading to an invitation to her to perform before the Imperial Court between 1603 and 1604. How and why did Kabuki become all-male performance? Lombard explains;

Kabuki remained an entertainment of the common people – in reality a protest against social as well as dramatic conventions. Those who devoted themselves to its interests were men without honourable employment and women from the prostitute quarters. Gross immorality and unbridled licentiousness made it a social danger; and as early as 1608 official order confined it to the outskirts of the cities.

Two decades later, in 1629, Onna Kabuki, Okuni's Kabuki, was completely prohibited and young men took it over. Its name changed to Wakashu Kabuki. Robert Cohen (2006) sums it up aptly saying; "In the space of fifty years, kabuki had switched from all-female dramatic art to an all-male one. Kabuki remains all-male to this day." (186) At least Okuni was lucky to try out her art for fifty years before it was hijacked, the female founders of masquerades in Nigeria were not as lucky.

The above stories are few illustrations of the paradox of female exclusion from mainstream traditional performances. The exclusion of women continued into the next stage of independent commercial theatre.

### **Emergence of women in Commercial Theatre as Actresses**

When theatre left the service of courts and shrines it hits the road to perform, no longer for rulers and gods but for common folks. It ceases to reflect on issues that bother the nobility and the supernatural, but that which bother the common man. It is no longer the stories of gods, kings and queens, it becomes the story of the life of common folks. Having left the restricted spaces of the king's court and the shrines and groves, it moves into the street and community spaces. It no longer played for small privileged aristocracy but to larger audiences of low class population. It has become a popular art.

When independent Professional theatre companies began to emerge, women were nowhere to be found and men continued representing female characters until developments in world politics and ideology made it mandatory for women to re-enter the theatre, beginning as actresses and dancers.

*Dr. Ngozi Udengwu*

In Nigeria, the Yoruba Popular Travelling theatre was a phenomenal experience for both the theatre practitioners and their audiences in the colonial era. A combination of indigenous and Western theatrical practices, this form of theatre came into limelight through the pioneering efforts of one man named Hubert Ogunde, in 1944. Few years

later he went professional and other performers followed his lead – including Duro Ladipo, Kola Ogunmola, Oyin Adejobi, and about two hundred others. Coming at a time when a performer had only his talent to boast of, with little financial remuneration and huge family harassment to deal with, these people faced a very tough theatre terrain. But that did not bother them as much as the need for female membership for their troupes.

The story was that no family wanted their daughter to join the expressive art of theatre which was considered to be immoral and any girl that performed with them was very likely to remain single for life. The companies had to make use of their creativity which they had in abundance, to attract the feminine presence which the audiences desired so much. This they achieved through costume and makeup. Biodun Ladipo, one of the matriarchs of the Yoruba Popular Travelling theatre, explained to this writer how they used oranges to create breasts for the male actors to enable them play female roles and apparently aid suspension of disbelief.

But when audiences had had enough of watching men impersonating female, they began to clamour for real female presence. When the need for greater realism became imperative, the theatre companies became desperate to recruit women. It was reported that Hubert Ogunde started advertising for female desk clerks. Why was he inviting desk clerks when what he needed, desperately, were actresses? Ebum Clark, who did a major research into the life and theatre of Hubert Ogunde reported that he had, earlier, set out an advertisement in a Newspaper for “30 Charming young ladies as paid actresses”, but received no response. A month later he changed the tone of the advert to “10 CHARMING YOUNG GIRLS AS Clerks” and the number of girls that responded to the advert exceeded his demand (3).

The trick worked but only for a short time. Soon parents were alerted that their daughters whom were believed to be desk clerks were actually stage performers. Parents and family members began to stalk the troupes and drag away their girls, causing disruptions and scandals for the theatre gurus. Solution eventually came when the theatre company leaders decided to engage their wives as actresses and dancers and also to marry the most talented female members of their troupes, in order not to lose them. The harassment eased off and the emergence of women in theatre began.

Also, in response to the demand for greater realism in theatre, some Japanese directors tried to modernize Kabuki by making it more contemporary in subject matter, characterisation and even costume and other technical design. But the cast remained all male until Kawakami Otojiro (1864 – 1911) took his performance, *The Geisha and the Night* on a tour of the United States, in 1900. The desire of the United States audiences to see females playing female roles, prompted the director to use his wife, Sadayakko (1872 – 1946) who was a trained dancer, to play the lead female role. Subsequently she performed in all their European tours and was greeted with much critical acclaim. Commenting on this incident Zarrilli Phillips et al [2006: 293] point out that

“Sadayakko’s presence on the international stage challenged the exclusion of women from female roles and professional actor training in Japan.” Back home in Japan nothing changed rather the onnagata (actors who specialise in playing female roles in Japanese theatre) were trained to play modern women in western-style realist plays. Tsubouchi Shoyo (1859 – 1935), a leading literary critic, who introduced the western realist novel to Japan, argued that as long as realism is concerned there cannot be any substitute for female roles, no matter how good the onnagata may be in his art. Realism demands that female roles must be played by women.

With that conviction, Shoyo decided to found a theatre institute where both male and female actors were trained and in his 1911 production of *Hamlet*, one of his students, Matsui Sumako (1886 – 1919) became the first professionally-trained female actor to emerge on Japanese stage. Matsui began to circulate among other shingeki troupes and by 1930 female actors have become a common feature in comedies and dramas of contemporary themes.

England is not left out in excluding female actors from the stage and using boys to act female roles and old men to act aged female roles. With reference to 16<sup>th</sup> century England, Robert Cohen (2006:142) discloses that;

The troupes were all male. Women never appeared on the English stage during Shakespeare’s life time, nor, indeed for nearly fifty years thereafter; female parts were instead played by boys who were apprenticed to the troupe.

The writer further informs us that the law that forbade women to appear on English stage was eventually repealed in 1660. Throughout the world and for centuries women’s talents were suppressed at will until much later in history.

### **Pioneer Female playwrights**

Education of women came late in the history of almost all countries of the world, and with it came women writers. It is the expectation of many writers that women writers will use their work to rewrite the image of women not only in literature but in the society. This does not seem to be the case with many pioneer female writers, as Maggie Gale (2000) observes in the following words;

Rare acknowledgements of women writing for the theatre of the time, made by our own contemporaries, are often underpinned by comments on their seeming lack of a feminist perspective or innovative strategy: they were largely middle-class, writing for a commercially oriented theatre and so the assumption is that their work does not warrant serious examination. Women writing for the variety of theatres which produced plays during the 1920s and 1930s have in common their gender and more of a general leaning towards the conservative than modern feminist scholars would perhaps like.

The conservative stance of pioneer female writers may seem to contradict the popular expectations of gender-sensitive scholars, but Deidre LaPin [1987: 109] maintains that it is understandable because, according to her "Old tales furnished a starting point for re-thinking the woman's role." Some scholars have, however, managed to detect subtle feminist trappings in the works of these pioneer female writers. But overtly there allegiance lie elsewhere rather than in altering the socially constructed image of women.

Hrosvitha von Gandersheim (930 – 1002)

A Benedictine nun from Saxony, Northwestern Germany, Hrotsvitha's were believed to be the first plays to be written by a woman. This makes her the world's first female playwright. She was writing poetry and history. In the convent, an abbess named Gerberga, niece of the Holy Roman Emperor, Otto 1 the Great encouraged her to write plays on Christian themes. And that she did. She is credited with writing six plays though by the time they were recovered most of them were lost and some of the recovered ones had missing parts.

Considering the condition in which she wrote her plays, it is not surprising that women's problem was not the focus of her work. Being a nun she may not have experienced what it took to be a woman in the wider medieval society. And being a nun her allegiance was to the church, and she used her writing to advance the doctrine of her religion. Not to talk about her connection with the power that be. Consequently her plays, according to Jones Lewis, "are founded upon legends of the saints, selected with a view to a glorification of religion in its supremest efforts and most transcendental aspects". This is clearly illustrated in one of her plays titled *Paphnutius*. Set in the Roman Egypt of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, the play is an illustration of how a prostitute, Thais, was converted to Christianity and eventually became a saint. The story began with a group of priests discussing about harmony in the created world. Next, one of the priests, named Paphnutius, saw a prostitute named Thais, "who shines forth in wonderous beauty and yet threatens men with foul shame". Against the backdrop of perfect harmony in the created world in the opinion of the priests, a prostitute is an imbalance and discordant with the scheme of things. Within the woman is a dichotomy of body and soul and she needed a spiritual intervention to bring back harmony in her life. To do this, Paphnutius, a hermit pretends to be a customer. What seemed to be his worry was that men were losing their hard earned money on her for, as he explained to his disciples, "not only frivolous youth dissipate their families' few possessions on her but even respected men waste their costly treasures by lavishing gifts on her..." She "is ready to ensnare all men with allurements of her beauty and drag them along with her to eternal perdition." Steven L. Wailes (2006) in *Spirituality and Politics in the Works of Hrotsvit of Gandersheim* concurs with this allegation against Thai when he writes, "The root of her lechery is her cupidity, and so she has been the ruin of many men whose sexuality led them down the path to poverty." [185] After her conversion she was made to destroy four hundred pounds of gold and burn other articles of treasure. Thereafter she was taken to a convent and put in

the care of an abbess where she fully repented from her sinful ways and worked for her salvation, till her death.

It is interesting to see how the world has advanced from the medieval period to the present postmodern times. The sin of Thais was that she was making money out of men. Before the coming of Christ she would have been stoned to death. In the present socio-political dispensation it is simply not an issue at all. What happens between two consenting adults is not any body's business.

Not surprising, too, is the fact that her plays were discovered about 1500, centuries after her death. The earliest evidence of the performance of any of her plays was in 1888 in Paris. They were, therefore closet drama meant to be read rather than performed.

Zulu Sofola is the first published female playwright in Nigeria. She was the first playwright to raise female characters to the status of tragic heroes and to make domestic issues subject matter for dramatic construction. Her treatment of female characters maybe found counterproductive at this crucial time in women's struggle, but Sofola was only responding to the social condition in which she produced her work. She was the only woman in the midst of men, a situation that called for caution. Again, born into a royal family and married into a royal family, she probably felt she owed a duty to protect traditional culture. Her royal blood made her a custodian of her people's culture and she devoted her energy into the enterprise.

Sofola was a versatile artist – a playwright, a theatre director, an administrator, a teacher, a wife and a mother. Her first play *The Disturbed Peace at Christmas* was published in 1968. It took two decades for another woman, Tess Onwueme, to emerge in the field of playwriting in Nigeria.

Sofola's plays are highly moralistic and pro-tradition. She is uncompromising when it comes to issues pertaining to cultural ethics, which she believes to be infallible. Thus her tragic characters, usually mostly women and rarely men, who are opposed to any aspect of the culture of the land, are actually villains, from the cultural point of view.

Dapo Adelugba did the earliest critical study of Zulu Sofola's plays. In his 1978 article he argues that *King Emene*, "is not a very ambitious play, and that the playwright's canvass is rather narrow..." [1978:208]. About *Wedlock of the Gods* Adelugba opines that, "The frustrated love of Ogwoma and Uloko could perhaps have been treated with greater conviction and force. The plotting of the play is altogether too simple and transparent for it to merit serious consideration in the genre of tragedy. Even the trance scene (Act III Scene II) is too trivial and arithmetic in progression to carry an audience with it. The ending of the play is an amazing piece of banality. [p.209]"

He also finds some scenes of *Wizard of Law* "weak" "hardly convincing", including "poor dialogue" and "inflated, ungrammatical language", [p.211] etc. He, nevertheless, gives commendation to the playwright's authentic imagery, diction and rhythm.

Olu Obafemi, on his part, observes that,



Some of her plays advocate a return to a past that could reasonably be regarded as decadent, where magic, ritual and a certain overdose of tyranny of age towers oppressively. [1988:212]

The articulate critic obviously has a lot to complain about Sofola's apparent support for the traditional African social system that oppresses women. Besides her "uncritical acceptance" of tradition, Obafemi complains of her lack of knowledge of the tragic convention, her "simplistic plot" and her "empirical treatment of recurrent and stereotypical themes that lack plausibility" [p.213]. Obafemi reasons that these numerous flaws in Sofola's plays must be responsible for her apparent obscurity. The critic goes ahead to cite other unfavourable critical comments made by other writers in order to show that Sofola is not ignored by critics for any reason other than the fact that her works have nothing to attract their attention. He recalls Dapo Adelugba's remark that *King Emene* has a narrow canvas and that the plot of *Wedlock of the Gods* is too simple and transparent to merit any serious consideration in the genre of tragedy. He also quotes Dan Agbese of *Newswatch Magazine* as saying that an evening spent drinking ogogoro (local gin) is more rewarding than that spent in watching Zulu Sofola's play, "The Aftermath". Taiwo Olurontoba- Oju is quoted as saying that Sofola's drama lacks any meaningful thought, an Art-for-Art's sake good for making people laugh. He then advised her to apply her wealth of knowledge and experience to more positive and pertinent use; that she should move away from the "old school" with its "outdated mores and burdens", to reflect on the present realities in the society; that she should aim at liberating her sex rather than advocating their suppression, and finally, that she should emulate other female writers such as Flora Nwapa, Omolara Ogundipe-Leslie, and Buchi Emecheta in their effort towards the emancipation of women in particular and humanity in general. Apart from Ben Tomoloju who recommended a second showing of "Aftermath", almost all the early critical comments on Sofola's plays were uncomplimentary. In spite of his dissatisfaction with Sofola's plays, however, Obafemi does not fail to observe the linguistic power of the playwright, which he describes as "simple, clear and lucid" [p.214]. He also sees "abundant drive, energy and industry" [p.215], which can be put to better use for the good rather than damnation of humanity.

Chris Dunton, about the greatest reviewer of Nigeria's female playwrights, feels that, whatever theatrical import Sofola's plays may have achieved, it is undermined by her unmediated representation of traditional elements. Dunton recalls the enthusiasm with which Nigerian critics welcomed the first female dramatist in the profession that was becoming an exclusive preserve of the men. He refers particularly to Dapo Adelugba's enthusiastic response to Sofola's initial attempts, an enthusiasm that was quickly withdrawn "because of a growing antipathy towards the ideological orientation of her work." [1992:32] Dunton finds problems with virtually all the plays of Sofola. For instance, in spite of its credit for portraying drama as healer and hero, Dunton feels that *Disturbed Peace at Christmas* is not "reflective enough and the scenario is too patchy." [p.33] *Wedlock of the Gods* is "seriously undermined by its textual ideology" and, referring to *The Sweet Trap* he declares that "Sofola's handling of the wives' rebellion is certainly startling enough". [p.35] The writer

concludes that *Song of a Maiden* is a “sterile theatre” [p.44] meant for an audience who are not given to reasoning.

Charles Nnolim sees clearly that this apparent apathy to the condition of women in the works of some female writers, especially the pioneers, contradicts feminist objective. The discordance among women in their fight for a better status in the society reveals to Nnolim that the days of feminism in Africa are numbered. He groups women into five according to their approach to the woman issue and discovers that while the female critics are singing different tunes, female writers, notably Flora Nwapa and Zulu Sofola, are singing another.

Examining the actual meaning of the word “sweet” in *The Sweet Trap*, Deirdre LaPin reveals the ironical use of the word to describe social expectation of the woman. A woman is ‘sweet’ only when she lives up to the social expectations of her society, whether she is happy herself or not. Thus, according to LaPin the word ‘sweet’ in Zulu Sofola’s *The Sweet Trap* is used “sardonically to describe four middle-class households dominated by husbands who create discord by ruling with iron hand.” [1987:102] As long as the women allow themselves to be so ruled by their husbands, they retain their sweetness and save the marriage in particular and the society in general, from collapse. Since a woman’s loss of herself makes the society happy, ‘sweetness’ naturally will mean a different thing for the woman – the recovery of herself, the fulfillment of herself. LaPin, thus, advocates a new “Sweetness” – the kind that benefits women, too.

*Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi, in dismissing Sofola’s traditionalist idea, employs the use of a short and precise typical Nigerian expression. She says that writers like Zulu Sofola, Ifeoma Okoye and Zainab Alkali are simply “throwing sand into feminist garri” [1988:63] which means that their writings contradict feminist goals.*

The foregoing are some of the critical responses to Sofola’s creative endeavour. The most controversial aspect of Sofola’s dramaturgy seems to be her ideological orientation and alleged artistic incompetence, while on the other hand however, her strongest point is on her use of language. The above were the unfavourable critical responses to the first female playwright to venture into the male dominated field of playwriting. Few favourable comments occurred after the death of the matriarch.

## Conclusion

Though women seem to enjoy a lot of visibility in this age, relatively speaking, it was a hard and long fought battle by generations of women some of whom did not live to see the fruit of their hard earned rights. The purpose of this writing, therefore, has been to reveal the undercurrent on which the modern woman’s existence was built, to show that it was not always as friendly as it appears today. Theatre was for centuries a no go area for women among cultures of the world, not because women lack intellectual or artistic resources to engage in the expressive art of theatre, but because they were politically and culturally banned to venture there. We looked at evidences that illustrate that women were actually the pioneers in the art of performance, the founders of very serious and

enduring performance genres like the masquerade theatre in Nigeria and Kabuki theatre in Japan and yet are banned from participating in these performances. We have also seen how this exclusion and marginalisation of women from main traditional spaces continued into the independent commercial theatre spaces where women were only allowed in when it became imperative and even then they remain on the sideline, playing supporting roles. The pioneer female playwrights seem to have faced double attacks. While mainstream theatre critics and scholars ignored them, feminist critics accused them of failure to use their plays to advance feminist course. We saw how Hrotsvitha's plays were discovered at least four centuries after her death and first performed another four centuries after that. First critical review of Sofola came a decade after her first play was published and was not favourable and continued to receive unfavourable criticism until after her death.

## References

- Adelugba, Dapo. 1978. Wale Ogunyemi, Zulu Sofola and Ola Rotimi: Three Dramatists in Search of a Language. *Theatre in Africa*. Eds. Oyin Ogunba and Abiola Irele Ibadan: Ibadan University Press. 201-218.
- Akinwale, Ayo. 1999. Zulu Sofola: Off Stage and at Home. *Zulu Sofola: Her Life and Her Works*. Ed. Mary Kolawole. Ibadan: Caltop Publications Nigeria Limited. 8-20.
- Akinwale, Ayo. 1989. Zulu Sofola: Her Writings and Their Undermeanings. *Nigeria Female Writers* (eds) Henrietta Otukunefor and Obiageli Nwodo. Oxford: Malthouse Publishing Ltd. 68-73.
- Akinwale, Ayo. 1999. Zulu Sofola: Ethos from a Nigerian Female Theatre Artist. *The Performer: Ilorin Journal of the Performing Arts*, Volume 1, Number 1: 64-73
- Alagoa, E.J. 1967. Delta Masquerades. *Nigeria Magazine*, Number 93:146-148.
- Beddoe, Deidre. 1993. *Discovering Women's History: A Practical Guide to the Sources of Women's History 1800-1945*. London: Harper Collins Publishers.
- Bellinger, Martha Fletcher. 1927. The Drama of Japan. In *A Short History of the Drama*. New York: Henry Holt and Company. P. 106 – 111.
- Cohen, Robert. 2006. *THEATRE* seventh edition. Boston: The McGraw Hills Companies.
- Dunton, Chris. 1992. *Make Man Talk True: Nigerian Drama in English Since 1970*. New York: Hans Zell Publishers.
- Dunton, Chris. 1995. "Zulu Sofola." In *The Cambridge Guide to the Theatre*. Ed.. Martin Banham.
- Evwierhoma, Mabel. 1999. Zulu Sofola's cultural concerns and their Implications for Postcolonial National Development in the Next Millennium. *Nigerian Theatre Journal* volume 5, Number1: 19-24.
- Gale B. Maggie. 2000. Women Playwrights of the 1920s and 1930s. In (eds) Elaine Aston and Janelle Reinelt. *The Cambridge Companion to Modern British Women Playwrights*. United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press. P.23 – 37.
- Iji, Ede M. 1996. *Black Experience in Theatre Volume 1: The Drama of Human Condition*. Makurdi: Editions Ehi.

- Lapin, Deirdre. 1987. Women in African Literature. *African Women South of the Sahara*. Eds. Margaret Jean Hay and Sharon Stitche. London and New York: Longman. 102-118.
- Lombard, Frank Alanson. 1928. Kabuki: A History. In *An Outline History of the Japanese Drama*. London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd. 287 – 295.
- Nwamuo, Chris. 1993. Critical Responses to Nigeria's Social Dynamics: Sofola and Onwueme Contextualised. *Theatre Studies Review* Volume 1, number1: 1-13.
- Nzekwu, Onuora. 1981. Masquerade. *Drama and Theatre in Nigeria: A Critical Source Book*. Ed. Yemi Ogunbiyi. Lagos: Nigeria Magazine Publications. 131-138.
- Obafemi, Olu. 1988. Zulu Sofola. *Perspectives in Nigerian Literature from 1700-present A Critical Selection from The Guardian Literary Series*. Ed. Yemi Ogunbiyi. Nigeria: Guardian Book Publications Limited. Vol. 1: 211-21
- Obafemi, Olu. 1998. Zulu Sofola: Three Years After. *ANA Review* October-December. P. 11.
- Obafemi, Olu. 1996. *Contemporary Nigerian Theatre: Cultural Heritage and Social Vision*. Lagos: Centre for Black and African Arts and Civilization (CBAAC).
- Ojomo, Abimbola Ademola 1983. A Comparative Analysis of Yoruba, Efik and Ibibio Masquerade Performance. A Ph.D University of Ibadan.
- Onyeneke, Augustine. 1987. *The Dead Among The Living: Masquerades in Igboland*. Nimo: Asele Institute.
- Reed, Bess. 1998. Playing With Prohibitions: Women, Agency and Masquerades. *African Arts* Vol. xxxi, No.2, Spring. P. 71.
- Sofola, Zulu. 1994. *The Artist and the Tragedy of a Nation*. Ibadan: Caltop Publications.
- Sofola, Zulu. 2001. "The Theatre in the Search for African Authenticity." *The Performer: Ilorin Journal of The Performing Arts*. Ed. Bode Omojola. Ilorin: University of Ilorin. Volume 1, Number 1: 8-32
- Sofola, Zulu. 1972. *Wedlock of The Gods*. Ibadan: Evans Brothers (Nigeria) Publishers Limited.
- Sofola, Zulu. 1977. *The Sweet Trap*. Ibadan: Evans Publishers.
- Taylor, Lib. 1993. Early Stages: Women Dramatists 1958 – 68. In Eds Trevor R. Griffiths and Margaret Llewellyn-Jones *British and Irish Women Dramatists Since 1958: A Critical Handbook*. Buchingham. Philadelphia: Open University Press. P. 9 – 25.
- Wailles, Steven L. (2006) *Spirituality and Politics in the Works of Hrotsvit of Gandersheim*. Selingrove: Susquehanna University Press.