The Archaeology of Black Theatre

by VeVe A. Clark

INTRODUCTION

Black theatre history is turning artifacts into living monuments. During the 1970s, important studies of the Federal Theatre, black community theatres in California, Trinidad Carnival and the Ejagham Leopard mime from Nigeria and Cameroon have unearthed, analyzed and described performances and texts as diverse as the black world itself. (1) What these books have in common, besides impeccable scholarship and readibility, is their fundamental approach. They each treat theatre as cultural expression combining literature, art and sociology.

Why such milestones in black theatre history have appeared at this time is a question not easily answered. All of these recent works have made full use of primary sources - a rare circumstance for most researchers in black theatre. There may be another distinction these studies suggest as well. Each demonstrates a commitment to the use of ethnographic and oral history techniques in a field that generally relies solely on written archives. Perhaps, as of the '70s, a new methodology for the study of black theatre has emerged.

From my own work in the field and analysis of the literature devoted to world theatre, I have come to call the new methodology archaeology. (2) How archaeology in a black context differs from the literal definition of the term, what archaeology collects, analyzes and describes, how an archaeologist distributes the results of analysis are subjects in need of scholarly discussion.

Why theorize about black theatre history when black actors are barely subsisting on extended unemployment and black theatre ensembles aren't worth a dime of their own? True, administrators and professionals in black theatres continue to confront crises daily. By now, though, we should recognize that there are no facile solutions to the problem of financial solvency in our theatre. The red and the black of economic support remains a complex problem involving multifarious approaches and commitments. It may be instructive, at this point, to redirect the discussion of theatre survival away from professionals and onto the theatre audience itself.

In the 1960s, the theme of responsibility and the black audience crystallize around numerous issues. In a recent article , "Black Theatre and Audience Development", Sheila Radford-Hill (1978 pp 39-40) recaptures the old debate and focuses on an important agent of change I believe archaeology can address. Radford-Hill (1978, pp. 39-40) writes:

> Our audience problems are infinitely more subtle than obtaining reliable costs analyses of additional seating, and much more complex than securing additional media coverage and weighing the inclusion of a matinee performance against doing two shows on Saturday night. At the risk of belabouring the obvious, I hasten to add that more revelry, better concessions, and whiter plays

...../ won't ...

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won't solve the problem either.

> Audience development means community support through enlightened participation. For this, one must attempt to sustain interest past openings, theatre nights, thespian parties and annual fund-raisers. The idea is to generate a level of audience sophistication that will expand both the impact and the direction of black performing arts. (Emphasis added.)

The key position in the '70s seems to be that audiences can only be responsible for what they know of theatre expression. The theatre historian plays the role of guide, of mentor, even, for the audience, providing a link between work/street reality and theatre world.

Archaeology, like history and other disciplines designed to retrieve past glories, is ultimately an educational tool. Anyone who has read Errol Hill's Trinidad Carnival or Free, Adult, Uncensored: The Living History of the Federal Theatre Project, by John O'Connor and Lorraine Brown, looks forward to any and all theatre "enlightened". The task for the theatre historian is to make historical material suitable, readable and accessible. The aim of archaeology in black theatre, then, is to create living monuments (in the form of exhibits and theatre notebooks) devoted to individual plays, players or movements. To achieve that end, an archaeologist must identify a generalized audience as part of the goals of research.

In my work on black theatre, I find myself speaking to an audience which would not likely recognize the name, Angelina Grimke, but would know the names of Katherine Dunham, Lorraine Hansberry and Ossie Davis. I speak to individuals unlikely to mistake the acronym NEC for a company selling electricity; who have heard of For Colored Girls ... but may not pronounce "Ntozake Shange" in six syllables; who know Leroi Jones and Amiri Baraka both live in Newark and who are, moreover, aware that The Wiz was a play before either Judy Garland or Diana Ross played Dorothy in celluloid. That list defines my secondary audience; the primary target group I want to involve in black theatres may recognize one or maybe none of the above (3).

Traditional archaeology and informed black theatre history share a common perspective on culture. For the two, culture is buried in layers. The artifacts, features and non-artifactual materials traditional archaeology excavates (4) are analogous to the remains a theatre historian collects: script, costume, set and lighting design. In the case of black history, these theatre artifacts have been literally or psychologically buried.

For the analysis of hidden or buried meaning in a text, I have been influenced in my thinking by the early work of comtemporary French philosopher and critic, Michel Foucault. Many of his investigations into European history bear the subtitle , "an archaeology of ..." he has also written a treatise on the subject entitled The Archaeology of Knowledge (1971) (5). But the history of black theatre cannot rely solely upon the text and textual analysis. I am certain that none of the four studies I mentioned earlier could have been completed primarily within the confines of a research library. Moreover, countless texts on black culture are out of print, others are rare, some distributed in limited edition.

Extra-textual research in black theatre is an even more obscured field. Artifacts from the Federal Theatre, which promoted some of the most experimental black performances in this century, were literally hidden away for three decades. According to Errol Hill and Margaret Wilkerson, aspects of national and community theatre in Trinidad and California have been

virtually "lost" to an international audience. Partly, black theatre in that context is too local and serves a non-mainstream function the dominant culture can afford to ignore. Even more deeply buried are popular forms that are "lost" because they are unwritten - in the alphabetical sense. Researchers attempting to understand these aspects of black theatre find themselves adopting methods similar to those used by cultural anthropologists.

Archaeology has proven to be a useful term in my work in Haiti because it helps to focus attention on certain sociological aspects peculiar to black theatre. Like traditional archaeology, the archaeology of black theatre excavates materials "lost" in layers. The layers in theatre studies are social rather than geological and they reflect the elaborate color/caste/class distinctions of our existence in the New World.

Searching for popular theatre forms in Haiti, I have been led about the island from playwrights in their groups to societies in their villages. The distinctions between the individual theatre groups might have been overlooked had I not understood that though these theatre people are all Haitian, they nonetheless project recognizable social differences in need of identification. Similar diversities can be studied in black American theatre were it not for the tradition in America to eliminate discussion of group differences.

The American social reality, which is more sharply defined in the Caribbean, is one of stratification (6). In the islands, the complexity extends even to the eco-system (or perhaps mirrors or develops out of it). Gradations of color are clear on every level. A rose is not a rose in the tropics - a natural fact that Negritude poetry with its elaborate glossaries tried to teach us as early as 1938.

When I use the term archaeology, I am, at once, accepting certain established methods in the discipline and rejecting others. The theatre history that I know expresses a viewpoint from a particular strata of America - the silent, conquered reality of those whose ancestors were slaves. I am asking archaeology to take a decidedly organic perspective on culture. If it is to deal with African-American works, archaeology must be (1) transformational, (2) referential, and (3) resurrecting. Applied to black theatre, archaeology must provide measures that start and end with Third World experience without excluding the multicultural lives the common market makes us lead.

Euro-American measurement conspicuously starts without the Third World. On a scale that mixes classical Greece and the Industrial Revolution in one grand, illogical shock, Third World cultures are omitted from the yardstick, labeled "pre-logical", "pre-industrial", "pre-literate" in one breath. This situation will not do for an informed international readership; this type of ignorance makes a mockery of Euro-American advances and destroys the possibilities of transmitting African and Afro-American knowledge to others.

Time awaits a clear definition of the archaeology of black theatre. For the moment, I enumerate the following priorities for its use. The archaeology of black theatre prefers:

1 - to describe artifacts rather than infer behavior from them.

2 - to explore explicit contradictions in a text rather than accept stereotypes intended to render persons invisible.

3 - to voice the unspoken and tentatively define the unspeakable within a text rather than assume that the field of human discourse is limited

definitively by what has been said and how.

4 - to study process and transformation rather than product and continuity.

5 - to resurrect the past rather than reconstruct it.

1 - to describe artifacts rather than infer behavior from them. I challenge inference, a well-established technique in archaeology, because I have recognized a similar form of "inference" in the criticism of contemporary black life and culture. This attitude analyzes aspects of our culture as though we weren't there.

Recently, the author of an article on Jacques Roumain's peasant epic, Masters of the Dew, committed just such an oversight. The piece, written by Beverly Omerod (1977), a scholar at the University of Western Australia, completely ignored the specificity of Masters, ripped the novel out of Fonds-Rouge, Haiti, and described the symbolic meaning of the novel as though Masters of the Dew were primarily related to Indo-European mythology or Pre-Christian lore. Articles and reviews like this one bypass analysis in cultural context, skip from description straight to conjecture and ultimately leave blacks passively invisible at home.

2 - to explore explicit contradictions in a text rather than accept stereotypes intended to render persons invisible. In this regard, Ellison's insights in the novel Invisible Man continue to be perceptive. Ralph Ellison defined the phenomenon of social invisibility for us in 1947. In an interview from 1953, Ellison speaks of Invisible Man in this way: "invisibility has to do with the failure of most of us to regard the individual we contact as a human being. We resort to stereotypes. Sometimes they are innocuous, sometimes they are dramatic (7).

Investigating the lives of two women artists, choreographer Katherine Dunham and film-maker Maya Deren, I have learned how invisible women and blacks remain in the history of mainstream culture. Any group the larger culture wishes to minimize may be figuratively or actually obscured. In Madness and Civilization (1965), Michel Foucault brilliantly describes how Europe turned the insane person into an outcast and then physically erased him from society by incarcerating him with criminals.

A dramatic form of stereotyping surfaced in the course of work on the Maya Deren biography I am writing in collaboration with three other women. Legendary stories about the personal achievements of Maya Deren appeared even during her lifetime and grew immeasurably after her unexpected death in 1961. By the time we, as researchers, entered the field, Deren's legend had reached hyperbolic proportions. We were told on one occasion that she organized lumberjacks in the Midwest. Possessed by a Haitian loa, she reportedly threw a refrigerator across the room during the Geoffrey Holder/Carmen De Lavallade wedding reception in 1955.

Rather than discount these fabulous stories, we based our research on them and received from our informants corroboration, denial or embellishment of each legend. We did not "correct" the inconsistencies singular views of Deren's life presented; rather we let them stand together as documents, leaving the reader the choice of evaluating the message each document contains. As one collaborator has pointed out, we have created a Rashomon in biographical form.

3 - to voice the unspoken and tentatively define the unspeakable within a text rather than assume that the field of human discourse is limited definitively by what has been said and how. Here Michel Foucault's (1948, 1965, 1970, 1971) work provides an excellent model, especially his discovery of silences in the hyperdocumented history of European discourse. According to Foucault (1972, p.131) archaeology "designates the general theme of a description that questions the already-said at the level of its existence: of the enunciative function that operates within it, of the discursive formation, and the general archive system to which it belongs."

Foucault has been labeled a post-Structuralist and a positivist, even an anti-Structuralist (See White 1973, pp.23-24). Examining discourse on large scales, Foucault searches out texts relating to life, labor and language. His approach to a text has been described as "clinical" by Hayden V. White in an article, "Foucault Decoded: Notes from Underground": "...(Texts) are to be 'diagnosed' to determine the nature of the disease of which they are symptomatic. The disease discovered in them is always defined as linguistic in nature; Foucault proceeds in the manner of a pathologist. He 'reads' a text in the way that a specialist in carcinoma 'reads' an X-ray of tissue. He is seeking a syndrome and looking for evidences of metastatic formations that will indicate a new growth of that disease which consists of the impulse to use language to 'represent' the order of things in the order of words" (White, 1973, p.31).

The relationship between the sane and insane that Foucault describes in Madness and Civilization is the history of a silence, of "what was not known and what was not said about the subject (White, 1973, p.42). I imagine Foucault's method would prove invaluable in describing the history of vanguard black performance in America. Regarding the "unspeakable", a more deeply hidden level of silence, Foucault's method might be used with success to elucidate what is known and not said between the races and between black women and black men in levels of discourse from sermon, in news items and love songs.

4 - to study process and transformation rather than product and continuity. Silence is an essential component of art and literature given that the edited version of creativity stands as the true representation of art. Rarely is a critic inspired to study a painting in progress or a manuscript before it is revised. Ironically, though, we literary critics look forward to the publication of reviewed and corrected editions - such is the province of scholarship.

Archaeology, redefined, looks for and at the process of creation, at the transformations a text undergoes. Studying process in theatre informs one of the chasm that stands between text and spectacle. Although performance organization provides the link between the two, most critics still ignore "backstage" process (8). They miss the real birth of theatre. For most, a performance is born opening night by a mysterious act of human will and skill critics blindly and naively label "theer-tah."

Foucault, convinced that the history of ideas has mesmerized human thinking into finding continuity where in truth there is irregularity, calls for a reversal in our thinking as an initial step in discovering silent messages from history. In this case, if critics and directors believe that a play takes life only after dress rehearsal, the archaeology of black theatre argues the contrary. Evaluating a script well-performed on opening night is not sufficient. Advances in reading gesture and understanding space (9) have demonstrated how imperative it is that the study of discourse be expanded to include other areas of human statement.

The chapter Foucault devotes to "Archaeological Description" in The Archaeology of Knowledge (1972, p.170) summarizes the immediate parameters of his method. On change and transformation, Foucault writes :

> Archaeology is much more willing than the history of ideas to speak of discontinuities, ruptures, gaps, entirely new forms of positivity, and of sudden redistribution ... (Archaeology) seeks rather to untie all those knots that historians have patiently tied; it increases differences, blurs the line of communication, and tries to make it more difficult to pass from one thing to another.

Those "knots" Foucault mentions are particularly important in the telling of Third World history. The colonizer/colonized dichotomy scholars like Fanon (1967) Freire (1970) and Memmi (1965) explore is illuminated further by applying Foucault's reversal method to it. In general, colonists spin a saga about their own history based on a contrived sense of continuity from period to period, movement to movement.

In turn, the colonizer composes "history" for the colonized that reflects continuity only in its discontinuity. For centuries, blacks in the American hemisphere were told that their history was one of rupture from the past (10). If rupture in human behavior is a true phenomenon that histories fail to reflect, then, ironically Third World history is more real than Euro-American history which, for its inability to recognize discontinuities, must be surreal.

5 - to resurrect the past rather than reconstruct it. Because the discipline of traditional archaeology does not require involvement in the culture under study, artifacts are analyzed with a view to reconstructing not resurrecting a society. The difference in the two attitudes is profound. The latter requires identification with, even love for a particular society, while the former demands objectivity and distance. Archaeology in the study of black theatre eschews reconstruction and works to resurrect. According to Foucault, archaeology is designed "to 'defamiliarize' the phenomena of man, society, and culture which have been rendered all too transparent by a century of study, interpretation and conceptual over-determination " (See White, 1973, p.50).

Here, the archaeology of black theatre turns away from Foucault's distinction. The history of ideas applied to the black world has not obscured the past through centuries of exegesis. Black history has been hidden, maligned, often defended: but so far, save in a few areas like religion, that history has not been overstated. There exist multiple sites we must explore, most of which have been preserved in secret. Any methodology that seeks out black history owes it to its audience to push beyond reconstruction. Choreographer, Katherine Dunham, has accomplished this feat by keeping her dances and costumes from the 1940s alive in the minds and on the bodies of her former Company members and students at the Performing Arts Training center in East St. Louis, Illinois. The recent Dunham Gala in New York attests to how dynamic a Katherine Dunham museum truly can be (11). A rich model for black theatre in motion!

ARCHAEOLOGY IN PRACTICE

Resurrection of theatre and the arts is not solely a mechanical problem. Gestures, gossamer light inflection of speech in performance, need not be lost. Reliable notation systems have been devised to protect aspects of performance the text cannot hold. In dance, there are notation systems

like Labanotation and Benesh Notation. For the visual arts, film and videotape satisfy most archival demands. For performance, the twin disciplines of kinesics and proxemics - analysis of movement and space-relationships - provide a tool for notation (12).

What none of them does, however, is recreate the atmosphere, the emotion, the feel of art. Only the visual media with their manipulation of techniques (e.g., close-up, fades, superimpositions) can simulate what Janheinz Jahn calls the Kuntu or modality and form of an event.

Two years ago, Woodie King's New Federal Theatre attempted a restaging of the Orson Welles/John Houseman WPA extravaganza "Voodoo" Macbeth. Macbeth (1936), Black Empire (1936) and Haiti (1938), three of the many plays the Negro Unit of the Federal Theatre Project staged, had in common their use of themes related to Haiti (O'Connor and Brown, 1978, pp. 8-9, 116-123). During the initial work for the study I am writing on Haitian popular theatre, I focused on these three plays to measure how Americans visualized Haitian culture on stage. This was in 1972, a year before I made my first trip to the island of Haiti: at that time anything written about Haiti immediately held my interest. Macbeth, the least substantially "Haitian" of the three plays, owed its "authenticity" to the fact that Shakespeare's classic witches' scene was transformed by dancer Asadata Dafora Horton and Dunham dancer Archie Savage into a shimmering, mysterious "Voodoo" ceremony.

The 1977 revival of Macbeth directed by Edmund Cambridge, Jr., could boast of no singular name in dance, but did cast Esther Rolle (Good Times) as Lady Macbeth. Lex Monson played Macbeth. Critic Ellen Foreman saw the Cambridge version and another Macbeth directed by Lithuanian Jones Jurasas which ran concurrently at La Mama. Foreman negatively criticized the New Federal Theatre production of Macbeth for its abuse of language, pointing to the confusion between dialects that existed on stage. Foreman (1979) writes:

> Various Caribbean dialects are represented; British English creeps in, as does American. The murderers speak Cockney, no less. Some characters use the various dialects interchangeably from one sentence to the next.
>
> The problem goes deeper than surface inattention to language variance. Language is culture. It grows out of a specific life-experience and represents the characteristic thinking, values and expression of its speakers. To superimpose the King's English disregards the integrity of the culture being represented. I don't know what the effect was for audiences in 1936, but for an aware audience in 1977, it is insulting. (Emphasis added.)

Can or should a director seek to know how audiences reacted to a play forty years before? To raise questions about the above issues, I would like to discuss how the practice of archaeology might be used, especially in the restaging of a play like the Orson Welles adaptation of Macbeth. "Voodoo" Macbeth like most other productions by the Negro Unit of the Federal Theatre was a first on many levels. Woodie King's group, although committed to resurrecting Federal Theatre at Henry Street Settlement, bombed in 1977. Why? "Voodoo" Macbeth makes an interesting case study for the historian, particularly when a critic like Foreman emphasizes the time lapse

between the resurrection of an artifact and the performance of the original.

The significance of FTP and Macbeth as artifact in black theatre history is clearly demonstrated in Langston Hughes and Milton Meltzer's 1967 study, Black Magic - another landmark in theatre archeology. On the Federal Theatre, the authors report:

> The Federal Theatre Project established by the government's Works Progress Administration in 1935 proved a godsend to coloured actors during the Depression. In the big cities, Negro units were set up, and in some white groups token integration took place. The Project gave Negroes a chance for the first time to learn something about stage management, lighting and other technical matters relating to backstage activities - due to the objection of the white stage hands union and other craft syndicates. Even Negro-owned theatres formerly had to have white stagehands. And in coloured movie or vaudeville houses, according to union rules, only white operators could run motion picture projectors or operate spotlights. Negroes could do all these things in the Federal Theatre. In New York there was not only an excellent unit directed by John Houseman at the Lafayette Theatre in Harlem, but coloured actors were to some extent integrated in the Broadway units in the Living Newspaper productions and other shows. Negro playwrights, too, were given a chance to see their scripts come alive, and actors thirsty for juicy parts had an opportunity to play them in Harlem, Chicago and Los Angeles.
>
> Edna Thomas was a fascinating Lady Macbeth at the Lafayette in the Orson Welle's production of a tropical Macbeth laid in Haiti. Jack Carter played the lead, Canada Lee was Banquo and Service Bell the King .... When by an act of Congress in 1939 the Federal Theatre was abolished, it was a great loss to Negro actors and to young technicians anxious to continue the backstage training they could not get elsewhere (Hughes and Meltzer, 1967, pp 119 - 120).

In its four-year life span, FTP could claim to be the most important theatre program in America. Clearly a first in national theatre production, on October 27, 1936, FTP organized the kind of simultaneous performance we connect with radio and television media. FTP featured productions of Sinclair Lewis' It Can't Happen Here in eighteen cities all on the same night. (13) Imagine, though, citizens in each of the eighteen cities witnessing national theatre from a regional perspective rather than from the opposite angle which nation-wide television brings us today. Besides its scope, FTP may also be the best recorded theatre movement America has known because the federal government paid people to preserve their

history. For all of the above reasons, FTP is a perfect artifact for theatre archaeology, and "Voodoo" Macbeth an important landmark in black history.

The remainder of the discussion will be devoted to analyzing the date excavated by and from the FTP archives and elsewhere (14) I will summarize 1) the ideal archaeological analysis of black theatre; 2) the artifacts from the Orson Welle's adaptation of Macbeth (1936); 3) the unspoken levels the production makes manifest. These descriptions are followed by a section called "Serendipity" and a concluding statement "Resurrection."

What is a theatre artifact? The printed text, manuscript, production and technical scripts are theatre artifacts. Within the total archive of black theatre texts we distinguish: Contemporary Production and Historic Resurrection. Playscripts as artifacts are further classified according to the function the text serves as a performance piece.

The largercategories are: Circumstantial and Formal. Examples of circumstantial black plays are Raisin in the Sun, Dutchman, The Toilet, Purlie Victorious, Haiti. Under this category are included studies of theatre associations and community theatre where the surroundings or certain local issues determine the focus of a text.

Formal playscripts give more weight to the how rather than the what of production. For Coloured Girls ..., The Wiz, dance theatre, musicals, festivals, prizefights, carnival and vodoun celebrations would be analyzed from the perspective of form. The purpose of the categories is not to limit or stereotype a work, not to create endless debate on whether say, The Toilet is circumstantial or formal, but is meant to elicit some thought about the overall effect a production projects so that critic, researcher and audience alike recognize the extent and nature of the critical apparatus to be used in seeing the work in depth. Macbeth from 1936, in 1979, would be classified (but not labled): Historic Resurrection/Formal.

Remembering that theatre world is tripartite, opening out into literature, art and sociology, helps orient the researcher before excavation begins. The text of a performance (including cues and revisions) is preserved as literature. Aspects of putting a play on, the spectacle, the design of lights and costumes, the gestures and voice of actors are remembered as art.

The least tangible factor, and, and therefore most often misrepresented is production: how the acting group was chosen, the play financed and advertised, the theatre building kept warm on cold evenings or cool on fetid summer afternoons; what the playwright, director and casts wanted the play to say then; how all parties interacted on/off stage, projected to and received from its audiences.

The sociology of theatre may be the most abstract feature of theatre production, but certainly it creates the foundation on which rest the art and literature of performance. Intangible though they may be, social features of theatre are not invisible. Simply speak with a cast member after a performance or intercept a handwritten note rushed from producer to director to lighting designer and back again along the same

route and you have some sense of how a particular group of theatre people interact around a specific production. After the show, of course, keen-eyed reviewers relate how the public interacted with the cast, and, space permitting, conjure up the latest backstage tales in the form of "so-and-so-said."

With these notions of theatre, text, spectacle and organization in mind, the archaeologist of black theatre defies a site and begins digging, using the tools of archival record, oral history and visual anthropology.

Plays in category I. (Contemporary Production) may lend themselves more to oral history and visual anthropology, while group II. (History Resurrection) - if it includes a play forty to fifty years removed from the date of original staging - will rely most heavily on archival and possibly even visual anthropology.

Analysis of the artifact is the next level of what I call ideal situations in archaeology, those instances when all elements are uniformly available and applicable. Here the playscript is dissected into text/spectacle/organization. analysis in theatre, as I mentioned earlier, can in the late 20th-century apply all of the following techniques where feasible. Artifacts can be studied from points as various as: linguistic, semiotic, kinesic, proxemic.

In a study of Haitian Vodoun as theatre, I would look at the linguistic structure of ritual songs dedicated to particular loas (deities), and sound (vevers, drum language and language). I would carefully observe the effect of lighting and costume, of gesture, by recording kinesic and proxemic responses during a ceremony. The latter two techniques will tell me a great deal about social organization in the Vodoun service. Combined with archives, visual anthropology and oral history, I should have a complete record of a particular Vodoun ceremony in one houmphor (place of worship).

Now one is prepared to describe in its totality the theatre experience which has been witnessed several times. An academic archaeologist refers to this process as inference for, from the analyzed artifacts, he now can uncover forces hidden by the centuries.

The archaeology of black theatre, which benefits from the presence of living society, but is not duped into equating survival with lack of change, shuns inference and in its place describes cultural information. Like academic archaeology, theatre archaeology discusses date by context, function, structure and behavior. In the case of the Vodoun, we look at context - when/where the ceremony takes place. When is ritual suppressed; in what season do certain forms of ritual arise? How does the architecture of the organization, the service, the place of worship relate to the rural, urban or national political structures?

In the same way, concentrating on function, one asks what the theatre performance wishes to accomplish, what it does. Interested in structure and then behavior, the archaeologist states how the theatre performance reaches its goals and why it wants to do so. The theatre historian synthesizes the massive amounts of data which, after a production, tend to float into oblivion, becoming invisible, ultimately enforced silences within the history of literature, art and sociology.

It is too early to give a complete list of artifacts and features left at the site of Macbeth. A number of the key participants, documents, and issues have not been raised. Nontheless the archive for Macbeth is a large one. Various strata (administrative to Thespian) are represented in memoirs and oral histories. General Director of FTP, Hallie Flanagan, whose papers are housed in the New York Public Library, wrote her memoirs, Arena, in 1940. In addition, she has written articles in FTP Magazine and Theatre Arts Monthly. John Houseman's memoirs, Run-Through (1972) interviews with Flanagan, Eleanora Roosevelt, and Elmer Rice (1961), production notes for actress Edna Thomas and conversations with Leonard Depaur have been preserved. (15) Cue scripts, costumes, visuals and videotaped interviews with former black actors involved in the production survive. Secondary sources include books and magazines. These are the beginnings, but certainly not the sum of the information a dedicated archaeologist might assemble on Macbeth.

To this point, we have captured the act and missed the shadow. We have not discussed the intangible elements of theatre - attitude and emotion. 'Shadow' needs little discussion here for this realm of reportage represents the starting and ending points of most theatre history. Any review relies upon such references. If, in the future, the highly subjective, intuitive approach critics use were supplemented with a study of clear remains that one can touch, theatre reviews would more easily represent the art of theatre and not the business.

The unspoken in Macbeth has begun to surface as an area for study. We hear nothing from the lower strata involved in the performance, the stagehands, and even less from the lay audience. The relationships between Welles and Houseman, between Edna Thomas and the three Macbeths are hinted at, but never well described. More information on the spectacular effects Aadata Dafora Horton brought to the dance are needed.

More on the black network among artists, on who took FTP as relief and who took part in the movement as release to grow professionally. The level of textual silence interests me in particular. Do the scripts that survive reflect Welles' adaptation alone or do they contain elements of black expression the actors suggested to Welles in the course of rehearsal? What part did actors play in editing, in musical arrangement? Reviews are wonderful word traps in which social attitudes become linguistic convention. A study of the reviews - from public relations blurbs through review articles - those written by blacks and whites, professional and amateur, represents an untouched archive of historical knowledge black culture would do well to analyze.

SERENDIPITY

There exists a field of "prehistory" theatre research which could potentially disclose knowledge previously locked away in popular forms. I am thinking of Robert Farris Thompson's participation in the Njagham Leopard (Ngbe) Mime in Cameroon and my own research on the relationship between mutual aid societies in Haiti (generically termed coubite) and popular forms of theatre like Vodoun and Carnival. In both cases, archaeological research led to the description of the unexpected. Both,

through participation-observation, defined a silence in context, then were led to make connections between heretofore unarticulated relics.

In 1973, Thompson, an art history professor, observed and was later initiated into the Basinjom cult of the Ejagham people. (16) In African Art in Motion, Thompson describes the Mime of the Leopard Society (17) by combining the sacred knowledge he learned as an initiate with observations of Ngbe society activities. In the course of explaining the significance of the Ngbe Mime, an unexpected connection between the text, spectacle and social organization is made by Thompson.

The serendipity in Thompson's analysis links written text and mime. He shows how the battles of sign language acted out in elaborate salutations is a kinesic representation of the indigenous written language, nsibidi, used for centuries among the Ejagham. For years, I have collected data on the various ancient writing systems that survive in Africa. Seven extant systems have been identified. They include embryo writing called aroko among the Yoruba and the following pictographic and idiographic systems: gicandi (Kikuyu), nsibidi (Ejagham), mende (Sierra Leone), mum (Cameroon), toma or loma (Liberia). The Vai script from Liberia reached the stage of phonetic writing.

I followed Egyptologist Theopile Obenga (L'Afrique dans l'Antiquité: Egypte pharaonique/Afrique Noire, Paris: Présence Africaine, 1973) on a journey which led from African writing systems to the Egyptian heiroglyphs. Like others interested in why and how Africans preserved knowledge in signs I remained baffled as to how these signs were integrated into the culture.

Thompson demonstrates that in the Ngbe society, nsibidi is what he terms "action writing". He writes:

> Knowledge and depth of membership (in Ngbe) is remorselessly tested by battles of sign language between two members. Each sign is, in a sense, a mimed nsibidi, and for this reason I designate the tradition 'action writing.'
>
> This secret idiom, called egbe, (132) is a gesture language referring, in the main, to symbols and ideas which bind men together and lend them strength or inspiration for the hearing and resolution of discordant social situations ..... (18)

Professor Thompson has located important data other researchers missed primarily because they were overly occupied with the artifact as text. As Thompson states early in his study, part of the subject matter of African Art in Motion is the "quality of active potentiality of the image." Referring solely to the text without discussing spectacle or organization, if we must speak in fractions, one loses one third of the knowledge the society practices.

In my work on popular theatre in Haiti, I let the subject lead me. It seems that, after three years in the field interacting with various levels of popular expression in Haiti, I have been led to a source. I believe there is a vertical connection on the level of discourse,

spectacle and organization between the forms of physical labour and theatre work. I was led to this observation through a simple fact. A man who belongs to a certain mutual aid society may join the same comrades in both religious and carnival celebrations. Although the proof of these ties emanates from Haiti, the connections may well exist in other agrarian societies. The theory may prove to be the missing link connecting work song,Dionysian cult and tragôidia (song of the sacrifice of the goat) with the rise of tragedy as we know it in Athens. (19)

Breaking through the silences societies impose on themselves or have thrust upon them will often lead to unexpected discoveries. In the case of the Njagham Leopard Mime, Robert Farris Thompson penetrated not only the spectacle and text of a society - the mask, the costume, the signs, the gesture - but he accomplished all of the above by relating the artifact to the living society.

In the case of Haitian popular theatre forms, the enforced silence is nearly as much an internal factor as it is an external one. Haiti has been cut off from the rest of the American hemisphere since the time of the successful revolution mulattoes and slaves waged against the French from 1793 - 1804. Successive American governments practiced political exclusion of Haiti from American affairs and helped turn Haiti into a petrified island.

Between 1804 and the time of the American Occupation in 1915, the Haitian struggle to develop autonomy existed in an atmosphere of internal political animosity which isolation from the mainland helped to increase. While this political isolation led to confusion and anarchy, it also helped protect valuable cultural artifacts long erased from the Old World societies that had made Haiti the Pearl of the Antilles. That Africanists of every persuasion are increasingly drawn to the petrified islands of Haiti and Bahia demonstrates how primary these two archaeological sites remain in our cultures.

RESURRECTION

Collecting, analyzing and describing cultural artifacts indicate that three quarters of an archaeologist's task has been completed. Working closely with museum coordinators, an archaeologist helps plan the distribution of his/her research in ways that the information will be best understood by the audience identified before excavation began.

Personally, I am partial to exhibits, films and audience handbooks. (See Redford-Hill. 1978, p.41)

The "African Art In Motion" exhibit in 1974 at the National Gallery, Washington, D.C., grew out of Dr Thompson's research. The exhibit design was superb, for rather than turn African artifacts into what Jahn calls Kintu, a thing without reference to human activity, the viewer could see the costume, the mask both at rest and in motion. Each exhibit hall featured displays in cases and a film loop. On film one could observe the very same costume "alive" on the dancer and in the context of the setting where the mime or dance theatre was performed.

The recent show in New York City featuring the theatre collection of Helen Armstead Johnson is another model for archaeological exhibits. Earlier, I mentioned Katherine Dunham's approach which, like the tradition of most popular theatre, passes on choreography and costume successively from generation to generation.

A pure archivist must wince at hearing that precious costumes thirty or more years old arebeing worn and torn, danced and sweated in and altered for younger, perhaps less appreciative performers. For the purist who wishes above all to protect the artifact, there is another less hazardous method of resurrecting theatre - the handbook.

Archaeological information on a particular play can be synthesized for presentation much in the way that the modern playbill summarizes plot and biographies for the public. A model like the Mercury Shakespeare pamphlets Orson Welles and Roger Hill prepared at Todd School, Woodstock, N.Y., in 1934 may suffice. (20) Inspired by youthful exuberance, they wrote introductory material for several of Shakespeare's plays with the intention of having students perform the dramas. Welles and Hill shared the task of writing an upbeat biography of Shakespeare and his times, included, as well, information on plot, chronology, grammar, the Bacon/Shakespeare controversy, followed by notes on staging. And, then, the text was copiously illustrated with humorous cartoons, and the student spurred on by the motto: "On studying Shakespeare's plays don't! Read them.Enjoy them. Act them. (Welles and Hill, 1934 1.3) Leave the research to the archaeologist whose discipline rescues artifacts alive.

FOOTNOTES

This article has been excerpted from Fieldhands to Stagehands, a study of popular theatre in Haiti by Vèvè Clark (forthcoming in 1980). Research was supported in part by dissertation fellowships from National Fellowships Fund and the MaBelle McCleod Lewis Memorial Fund. Readers to whom I am indebted for their suggestions and encouragement are: Dr. Marie-Hélène Huet, Daphne Muse, Deidre Lashgari and Robert Allen. Thank you, Deborah Schevill, for typing the original manuscript.

1. The pioneering works I refer to are: John O'Connor and Lorraine Brown, Free, Adult, Uncensored: The Living History of the Federal Theatre Project (Washington, D.C.: New Republic, 1978), Margaret B. Wilkerson, "Black Theatre in the San Francisco Bay Area and in the Los Angeles Area: A Report and Analysis" (Doctoral Dissertation, Dept. of Dramatic Arts, University Of California, Berkeley, 1972), Errol Hill, The Trinidad Carnival: Mandate for a National Theatre (Austin: University of Texas, 1972) and a chapter in Robert Farris Thompson's African Art in Motion (Berkeley: University of California, 1974). For the preservation of important black plays from the nineteenth century, the impressive volume by James V. Hatch and Ted Shine must be mentioned - Black Theatre, USA: Forty-Five Plays by Black Americans (1847-1974) (N.Y.: The Free Press, 1974). Paul Carter Harrison's The Drama of Nommo (N.Y.: Grove Press, 1972) contains an insightful chapter on black theatre. Two professors at

U.C. Berkley, Alan Dundes, Mother Wit from the Laughing Barrel; Readings in the Interpretation of Afro-American Folk Lore (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1973) and Lawrence Levine, Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought From Slavery to Freedom (N.Y.: Oxford Univ. Press, 1977) have compiled and analyzed sources of folk theatre under categories that range from folktale to toast.

2. There are important forerunners in the field of archaeology and black culture. Amiri Baraka's Blues People (N.Y.: William Morrow & Co., 1963) is notable in this regard. Baraka, too, combines literature (i.e. song text) and the art of black music with an understanding of the sociology of its adherents. While I have grave reservations about the total worth of Janheinz Jahn's Muntu: An outline of the New African Culture (N.Y.: Grove Press, 1961), I agree with his belief that adequate yardsticks must be provided by which one can analyze literature as ethnic expression. Jahn, as well, looked at literature as text, art and sociology.

3. Freedomways (First Quarter, 1978): 39-40. The following six paragraphs summarize a lengthy discussion on methodology deleted from the original.

4. For a thorough description of techniques employed in the field of archaeology, see James Deetz's Invitation to Archaeology (N.Y.: National History Press, 1967).

5. Foucault has replaced "archaeology" with the Nietzschean term "genealogy" in his most recent studies.

6. A thorough discussion of stratification in New World societies to be found in M.G. Smith's collected essays, The Plural Society in the British Caribbean (Berkeley, California: U.C. Press, 1965).

7. Rochelle Girson "Sidelights on Invisibility," The Saturday Review, March 14, 1953, p.49. The quote ends: "On the other hand you have the failure of the individual to exert himself, to be mature, to run the risk of humanity - and so he contibutes to his own invisibility."

8. J.E. Franklin is an exception. See her Black Girl: From Genesis to Revelations (Washington, D.C.: Howard University, 1977). A citation in Ralph N. Schoolcraft's Annotated Bibliography of New Publications in the Performing Arts 31 (Spring 1978) summarizes the run of Black Girl from New Federal Theratre (1971) to the Theatre de Lys, then television and finally off-Broadway. Schoolcraft writes: "In addition to the text of the play, the author relates the experience of a young writer's confrontation with what goes on behind-the-scenes in the theatre, film and television industries." (p. 5).

9. A solid review article on kinesics and proxemics applied to theatre studies appeared in The Drama Review 17:3 (September 1973). Entitled "Kinesics and Performance," the article was written by Richard Schechner with Cynthia Mintz (pp. 102-108). The entire issue is of interest also - "Theatre and Social Sciences."

10. The evaluation of how Euro-America misinterpreted the history of Africa and the Diaspora is told by Chancellor Williams, The Destruction of Black Civilization (Chicago: Third World Press, 1974) and Melville Herskovits, The Myth of the Negro Past (Boston: Boston Press, 1941/ 1958).

11. See Deborah Jowitt's review of the Dunham Gala organized by Dr. Glory Van Scott in "Blow Ye Winter Winds and Assorted Tropical Breezes," The Village Voice (February 5, 1979), p. 50.

12. Alan Lomax's choreometrics tries to combine the various notation systems I have cited for a closer reading of world dance movement.

13. "On October 27, 1936, twenty-two productions opened in eighteen cities: Birmingham, Boston, Bridgeport, Chicago, Cleveland, Denver, Detroit, Indianapolis, Los Angeles (two), Miami, Newark, New York (four), Omaha, San Francisco, Seattle, Tacoma, Tampa, and Yonkers. A production in Kansas City opened two weeks later, and nine of the units went on tour after the initial run. Before it was over, nearly 500 thousand people saw It Can't Happen Here: altogether it ran for an equivalent of 260 weeks, or a five-year run. Unfortunately, the citizens of New Orleans and St Louis were denied the chance to see the play. Local officials thought it too controversial; the career and death of Huey Long were still too fresh in the minds of the people," John O'Connor and Lorraine Brown, Free, Adult, Uncensored, op. cit., p. 59.

14. The story of how O'Connor and Brown located the "lost" FTP archives, including scripts, sets, costumes, technical equipment, is told in the Acknowledgements of Free, Adult, Uncensored, pp. vii-viii.

15. The Edna Thomas production notes are housed at the Federal Theatre Research Project, George Mason University, Fairfax, Virginia. The Leonard Depaur tape belongs to the Hatch-Billops Archives in New York.

16. Basinjom is a warrior cult. See Thompson, Preface to African Art in Motion, op. cit., p. xii.

17. The Ejagham Ngbe Society (Ngbe means leopard) is an all-male brotherhood devoted to the making and keeping of law, the maintaining of village peace, the hearing of disputes, and above all, the pleasurable dancing in public of secret signs of magic prowess," Thompson ibid., p. 180.

18. Ibid., p. 180. In his analysis of "action writing," Thompson acknowledges his indebtedness to Malcolm Ruel's Leopards and Leaders (London: Travistock, 1969) and particularly the contents of pp. 216 - 258. Footnotes 131 & 132 in Chapter 111 refer to Ruel, p. 240 of African Art in Motion.

19 For conflicting views on the origins of Greek tragedy see Gerald F. Else, The Origin and Early Form of Greek Tragedy (N.Y.: W.W. Norton Co., 1965) who argues against any connection between Dionysian and Athenian forms. For the opposing viewpoint, see Walter Burkert, "Greek Tragedy and Sacrificial Ritual," Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies 7 (1966): 87 - 121.

20. Current journals like The Theatre Annual (Hirman College, Dept. of Theatre Arts, Ohio), Theatre Notebook (London), and Theatre Checklist (London), all in the easy-to-handle playbill format, are excellent models for low-cost audience handbooks.

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