

# Fela Anikulapo-Kuti: Performance as African Carnavalesque Aesthetics

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Radio has made of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony a hit tune which is easy to whistle (Theodor Adorno)

The concept of popular arts in Africa is yet to be theoretically constructed (Karin Barber)

In view of (occasional) problems encountered in relating to the aesthetics of primarily oral texts like the ones under study here, I have deliberately tried to give a hint of the general direction of the essay from the outset. The choice of the word "carnavalesque" in the title is therefore geared towards this end; it is meant to embrace the total performance implicit in "carnivalisation,"<sup>1</sup> in strict Bakhtinian sense, among others.

The overall strategy of the essay is to locate these aesthetic experiences as transpositional, a sort of ruptured cultural continuum from folk to popular aesthetic practices of urban and city life. The study suggests that Fela recodes rituals and archetypes in three principal ways: mask-performance, divination and possession trance. Beyond this, it further explores Fela's lyrics and motifs, suggesting that they have been put in the service of an alternative discourse.

At about 10 p.m. on Saturdays, Pepple Street, Ikeja, Lagos (Nigeria) takes on an eerie mood. Pepple is demarcated from the Nigerian Police Force Headquarters by a slim fence. Contour-lined faces betray the anxiety of the unstated. Women with lip stick-coated mouths

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strut, men wearing base ball caps, fez caps, corduroy, and denim Jeans swagger by. Christian Dior, Alicia Alonso (irreverent perfumes) make efforts to impact on the whiff, but they are wafted off by a teenager's single puff of marijuana.

The floating clouds are within hand's reach, and they re-echo childhood

romantic memories of moonlight tales: "Once upon a time, the sky was quite close and everyone could touch it. And because everyone could touch it, they wiped their dirty linens on it. Seeing just how it had been disrespected, the sky vowed: 'never again'. So everyone woke up one morning, to find the sky high up, gone with its clouds, far away from human reach."

Pepple Street houses the African Shrine, where Fela Anikulapo-Kuti presides as Chief Priest of performance. But the Chief Priest is yet to arrive, so band boys are filling in the interim, now with group members, at other times with guest artists. The restive crowd is caught between the performance and its own excitements and conversations. Someone at the corner is making a larger-than-life claim; his motley crowd sees no point in disagreeing with him, so they nod in agreement, even though they seem to know better. A hawker takes the offensive, tries to convince her client that her price is not outrageous: "Dis gofment is bad, di economy no dey work; how e come be my brother, way small wrap of marijuana dey cost three naira. I fear O!"

There is a sudden eruption at the gate and clusters of youth, with clenched fists stretched out in black power salute, yell: "the Black President!" "Fela Baba!" "Baba Kuti!" Fela is guided to the stage, where he plays "just one tune," and retires in order to start actual performance for, "Saturday is comprehensive night show." Because Saturday is also a "divination night," Fela and his fellow worshippers indulge the audience with mask performance, practical divination and possession trance.

The ritual paraphernalia at the shrine include the statutes of Esu, Sango, Ogun and Orisa Obeji, along with these portraits of Malcolm X, Kwame Nkrumah, Patrice Lumumba and Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti adorn the worship cubicle. There are also earthen mounds containing: honey, palm oil-soaked wick and cowrie shells. Some kola nuts are placed in a covered calabash. A keg of palmwine and three bottles of Gordon Gin are tucked in a corner. A sacrificial cock in the cubicle looks away expectantly. The musical accompaniments for divination

rites are only four: metal gong, wooden rattle, conga drum, and a Western, brass drum-set with cymbals. The cubicle is lit by red, blue and green bulbs. The wick is lit for the ritual to commence, but the proceeding ritual is an exercise in recontextualization. At another level, it reveals the impact of the city and urbanity on erstwhile folk aesthetics and the rippling changes in their figural devices and meanings.

The ritual commences with the clanging of a metal gong and wooden rattle, followed by the conga. Then the SOUND from the drum set and cymbal is unleashed on the shrine in an upbeat, high-tempo pace. For a while, it is repetitive but suddenly takes on a faster tempo, reaching a crescendo with the rising smoke of the burning wick. At that moment, Fela appears, with a few votarists, their faces masked in white chalk powder. In these few minutes, one begins to observe a gradual encoding of diverse signifiers in the performance.

Only the metal gong and wooden rattle maintain a repetitive, continuous stream of clanging, while the accentuation of the Conga and drum-set cymbals denote alteration of tempo. The impact of the repetitive clanging here, as in traditional worship forms, is clearly evocative, a device by which elements of the ethereal and supersensible world are invited into ritual proceedings. Further, repetitiveness seems to be the universal vehicle of possession trance, and this conclusion is by no means inferential. A keen observation of diverse religious practices—Pentecostal Christians, Hare-Krishna devotees, Sango votarists—would reveal the effect of repetition as form on the spiritual transmutation of worshippers. The Islamic ritual form of stoning Satan at Kaaba reinforces this claim. As with these practices, possession trance is preceded by repetitive chants.

One also notes that improvisation takes such diverse forms as the psychic transformations, esoteric verses turned into narratives, spontaneous interpretations, recontextualizations, drumming, dancing, chanting, parody, ruses, reconstitutions of conventions and individual interventions into the ritual event. (Drewal 27). A poser could thus be raised: if ritual is steeped in improvisation, how do we recognize the ritual continuum, since there is a recontextualization in the ambience of the city? The situation is indeed a bit more complex. The alteration here goes beyond that of the in-body formulae expressed in drumming, for example, to an actual, evident change in the form of drum used for the evocative event.

The most attractive response to this problematic is to suggest that

recognition of a ritual continuum is assisted by a shared cultural awareness of codes in both its practical and ideational manifestations. But this leads us to grapple with a related issue: does music encode ideology? The instance and significance of our current example is indeed the manipulation of a Western drum set for an evocative purpose. To the extent that there is recognition of the cultic in this manipulation, then the resolution of the poser is at the level of decoding. We might then say, if by encoding we mean inscribing in its scalar forms, music does not encode ideology but rather, as Giammon aptly puts it,

music is ideologically, that is socially, invested with meaning. Meanings are not essential or eternal, they are social and mutable. Signifier and signified are not fixed, meanings are produced because both are part of systems of difference. (24)

The ritual process continues with Fela leading a few other votarists to the cubicle. He assumes a crouching position, picks up some cowrie shells and lobes of kolanut, throws them on a tray and begins to observe intently. His brows betray different moods from anxiety, perplexity to elation and satisfaction. At this point, he takes a bite of the kolanut and dips his left fingers into the honey mound for a taste. He sprinkles some Gordon gin on the ground for the ancestors, and then empties the contents of the bottle into the four fire points. The fires being infused with methanol, the flames rise, bathing this Chief Priest from the torso up with their light; but he is unyielding, does not move.

The head of the cock is ripped off with bare hands. Gradually, the Chief Priest stands up, holding the cock above his mouth and drinks the blood. His body is covered with sweat; his eyes, thunder-shot, are glittering; his teeth, blood red are grating. He is past concentration; he merely glares into space, momentarily suspended in the middle of nowhere. He is seemingly attempting to move but somewhat restrained by what the rest of us cannot quite see. His biceps are enlarged in this mimed struggle to break off; his head gradually drops to the right and he starts to mumble or chant, but his words are incomprehensible. Meanwhile, he seems to finally succeed in breaking this invisible chains binding him, and only then does he seem to regain consciousness of his immediate surroundings. With unsteady steps, he moves to the right of the cubicle and picks up a long canvas, soaked in water. Gripping it

with two hands, he swirls it round, moving backwards, eight steps, but with head thrust forward, gazing at the cubicle. He repeats this motion and then puts the calabash back. He finally pours some palmwine into a calabash and takes a sip. The remaining palmwine and an extra calabash are handed over to a votarist, who now takes the two calabashes up stage and feeds the other members of the band. Fela, now back on the stage, is handed a nine-centimeter long marijuana joint. He takes a long drag, as if it is some kind of oxygen survival dosage. He emits the smoke in one cloud-cluster and momentarily, his head disappears in it. He emerges to start prophesying and recounting the ritual encounter. His mien is that of one who has just returned from a distant journey.

A mask performance, whether traditional or avant-garde, is obliged to re-enact, as Fela continually demonstrates, at least some aspects of its constitutive form. The concept and practice of mask representation has been popularized by various African masking groups, including the Yoruba *egungun* society. The account of mask's proper origin is varied. Harry Garuba, quoting Babatunde Lawal, gives an insight into the mask-costume and the origin of the *egungun* phenomenon (84).

The concern here, however, is more with the signification of the mask-costume, as a derivative of the *egungun* tradition now relocated in the context of popular aesthetic practice. It must be agreed, though, as Garuba suggests, that one factor becomes central in all the stories of the origin of *egungun*: the element of impersonation in mask. With Fela's performance, the idiom is recreated, and thereby we have something slightly altered from the conventional *egungun* mask-costume to which we have become familiar.

Fela's mask performance, especially as regards rupturing of familiar time-space categories, finds eloquent affirmation in the African theatrical tradition, including those of the black diaspora. At the literary level, an aesthetic continuum can be demonstrated in Wole Soyinka's *A Dance of the Forests*, Derek Walcott's *Dream on Monkey Mountain*, and *Dutchman* by Amiri Baraka.<sup>2</sup> In these works, time and space are fused and expanded in the best tradition of black African narratology.

Their stage seems to eschew the linear, Aristotelian, unified plot structure, based on causality. Time-space realities are ruptured as we find in *A Dance*, whose episodes alternate between the worlds of the living and of the dead. Characters in *Dream* step out of socially acknowledged

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realities into the supersensible world and thereby, in part, affirm a cultural continuum as Walcott's production note to the play indicates:

The play is a dream, one that exists as much in the given minds of its principal characters as in that of the writer, and as such, it is illegal, derivative, contradictory. Its source is metaphor and it is best treated as a physical poem with all the subconscious and deliberate borrowings of poetry. (208).

As with the other plays, *Dutchman*, despite its apparent linear sequence of events, has a strong element of the episodic in its movement. The play, like a good number of West African mask festival enactments, places more emphasis on the situations and roles than on their causal connections.

Unlike in traditional Ifa divination process, Fela's assemblage of ritual paraphernalia and players is rather unorthodox. Ifa sacred palm-nuts (*Ikin Ifa*) and a staff used for tapping the divining tray (*iroke*), are some of the crucial items for traditional divination which are not represented in Fela's performance. Fela's specific reasons for the choice of the four divinities are yet to be explored, but one can immediately see a confluence of thought between the features of these divinities and his own aspirations and general interpretation of life.

*Esu* is simply the pre-eminent player in this cosmic drama, particularly because while others are invoked, *Esu* is appeased. While the other divinities are not essential to divination, *Esu* is, which explains why he is first appeased before one proceeds with the divination ritual. *Esu*, above all, is the keeper of *ase*,<sup>3</sup> the enabling factor that ensures that the appeased or the invoked "comes to pass." While the palmwine in the two calabashes that Fela hands over to other votarists may symbolize the diet of *Ogun*, the diagonal cross formation in handing them over has a greater bearing for *Esu*. This derives from his encomiastic verses, "*Esu mile: arita*" [*Esu of the crossroads*]. The concept of the cross, the crossroads as dispersal point of wish in ritual offering is common to all Yoruba deities, but it is more intensified in atonement and appeasement of *Esu*.

By these acts of representations and interpretations of dialogues with characters of the ritual text, like *Esu*, Fela seems to be role-modeling after the divinity. The suggestion by Gates that *Esu* is

contiguous with *Ogun*, in the sense that the former stands for the critic's muse, in the same way that the latter represents the writer's/artist's muse (35), is quite persuasive but needs to be qualified.

True enough, *Esu* may be the divine interpreter, but he is also the divine linguist as Gates himself acknowledges. In the context of folk performance, or its recontextualization as in Fela's popular art aesthetics, critic and artist are fused. My suspicion is that Gates may be relating to the dispassionate qualities of *Esu*, which indeed buttresses more or less the argument that he is the critic's muse, that is, the critic as a supposedly detached interpreter. But then, those qualities are more of *Esu*'s juridical attributes. While not denying salient and overt features of the critic in this deity, we misread cosmological narratives by denying *Esu* his role as a performer in the cosmic drama. *Esu* is in fact not simply a performer, he is the agent of conflict and the essence of denouement, but not necessarily in Freytag's pyramidal sense. This cast role of "Unknotting" contradiction and conflicts<sup>4</sup> is the most universal attribute of *Esu*'s encomiastic verses from Africa to the New World.

Fela's deification of Nkrumah, Lumumba, Malcolm X and Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti (Fela's own mother) in pictorial representation, which partakes of the process symbolizing the four divinities in sculptural representation, seems to reinforce the distinction made by earlier scholars between "historical" and "romantic" legends. Okpewho proposes the "qualitative approach" (69) as a complement to the structural and functional approaches in explaining the myth-legend saga. This approach attempts to classify and qualify these terms on the basis of scientific recognition of the relative weights of fact and fiction. The historical legend, Okpewho argues, has greater attributes of facts, lived experience, while the romantic legend moves towards the fictive, that is, the mythic.

These time-space categories can be expanded and contracted. While additional weight of facts may push a romantic legend to become historical, the reverse is also possible with an additional input of the fictive on an erstwhile historical legend. In this configuration, however, Fela's *Orisa Ibeji* is exceptional to the extent that it is not a representation of any particular personage. Like the sacred sculpture of a woman on her knees, it is believed to bring good luck and prosperity: "*Ejire so alakisa di oniigba aso*," [The twin turns the pauper into the prosperous].

Besides *Orisa Ibeji*, *Esu*, of the remaining three deities, undisputedly falls into the sphere of "romantic" legend since there are more historical claims on *Ogun* and *Sango*. However, this is largely academic. In terms of mass attitude, including Fela's ritual interpretation, these two deities [*Ogun* and *Sango*] are equally given the reverence of the romantic legend. For instance, the practice of this theory in performance terms is such that, Fela invokes the historical ancestors on issues of daily socio-political struggles. In "Unknown Soldier," Fela yells:

That my mama wey you kill  
She be the only leader of this country.

Apart from her unique contributions to civil rights efforts, what else makes Fela's mother a leader of the nation? Fela believes that it is because she is also an *age*, a term that is not quite captured by the English "witch." The *age* possesses potentially diverse energies. She is not necessarily evil or good; she could be either or both. Her sphere of performance is both terrestrial and extra-terrestrial. The same practice can be observed when Fela, in "Underground System," reminds us of Nkrumah's warning before his exit from the terrestrial:

Fela: One African government for all  
Chorus: Yees Oh.

But Fela's reverence of romantic legends plays a significant role when he invokes them, charged with the sacred registers of *ase* and the other cultic dictions. African leaders plot a devastating blow against the continent and its people in the narrative of "Clear Road for Jaja-Jaja" (CRFJJ), but the narrator interjects at a crucial moment:

Fela: E no go happen  
Chorus: E no go happen  
Fela: Because shrine e dey  
Chorus: E no go happen  
Fela: Africa must stay

Fela goes on calling on the different deities to grant Africa's plea for survival and decent existence. Elsewhere, he resorts to the code of *Oro*



cultists such as "Yeepa" and "Yeeparipa," with the inherent implications of anguish encoded therein from the mythical story of Oro's betrayal of *Obatala*, his master. Hence, in a number of his lyrics, we find a profusion of this refrain as a means of expressing the anguish of the habitu , the marginal Africans, betrayed by the treachery of the African ruling elites.

The inscription of white-chalk powder on the faces of band members, at the beginning of the performance, relates to the symbol of man conquering death in Yoruba ritual drama. Fela's communion with the past is a sort of ritual device to affirm presence with the ancestors. This merely complements Fela's last names: Anikulapo-Kuti, a cultural signifier which refers to this concept of continuity. It is more than an ideational category; it implies both sameness and difference. By the power of the mask, you cannot die; when "death" is reckoned with, however, it is believed to represent a transition to other spheres of performance. Life is believed to be a sort of self-regenerative, transformative, universal energy wound off by a first cause in the breath of Olodumare.

Since colonialism sought to explain away non-Islamic, non-Christian Africa as simply indescrpt, Fela's aesthetics seems to emphasize the inscription of a unique practice and theory of counter-culture. His mask display of ancestral sculptures triggers off a vibrancy of figuratives. Their simultaneous evocation of several dimensions of time is realized through congealed narratives of these figural sculptures, their condensation of myths, engagement in current dialogues and ability to prognosticate. Of these qualities, Garuba says:

The mask play itself often exercises anachronistic force upon our perceptions, breaking down our compartmentalizing categories by being able to move uninhibited between reality and ritual, the referential and the semiotic. (2087)

Fela's performance venue is called a shrine, reflecting the fact that he intends it to be more than a nightclub; it is meant to be a place of communal celebration and worship. Rather than the "tribal" communalism of old, however, his new society is a rallying point of Pan-African progressivism. Fela alludes to this stylization of the African shrine as a place of worship that embodies all the attributes of the

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performative arts.

Because of the above attributes, Fela prophecies--prophecy being, according to George Thompson, a development of possession (73-74). Drewal suggests that chanting and drumming performed prior to the outset of possession trance invoke the deity, bringing him or her into contact with the priest; in this circumstance, the priest becomes possessed and starts to pronounce the will of the gods (182-47). Anxieties, hopes and anticipations are now expressed by the priest, an act he may be unable to perform in his conscious life.

But beyond direct prophecy in the African shrine, the mnemonic devices of his songs are ritualistically structured to accommodate the pronouncements of the deities or what Fela once told me are, inspired tunes. In, "Big, Blind Country" (B.B.C), this is aptly demonstrated in his call-and-response technique, with the chorus pleading that he reveals his special insight.

Fela: Wetin my eye dey see  
Chorus: Tell us now, tell us now  
Fela: African Eye dey see  
Chorus: Tell us now, tell us now  
Fela: You must find your own  
Chorus: Tell us now, tell us now  
Fela: Traditional medicine  
Chorus: Tell us now, tell us now  
Fela: African medicine  
Chorus: Tell us now, tell us now  
Fela: So you can see  
Chorus: Tell us now, tell us now  
Fela: The correct thing  
Chorus: Tell us now, tell us now  
Fela: With the correct eye  
Chorus: Tell us now, tell us now  
Fela: Na wah oh!

It is instructive to note that, like in most divination processes, Fela's revelation comes very gradually, at first cryptically and later explicitly. After the partial revelation of the need for an Afrocentric perspective, he makes a more direct pronouncement.

All  
 Fela: African leaders  
 Chorus: Ye! Ye! Ye!  
 Fela: Na hire dem hire eye  
 Chorus: Ye ye ye  
 Fela: Na Oyinbo eye dem rent  
 Chorus: Ye ye ye  
 Fela: That is the reason why  
 Chorus: Ye ye ye  
 Fela: Corruption dye e  
 Chorus: Kuru Kere Kure Kere  
 Fela: Authority stealing dye e  
 Chorus: Kuru Kere Kuru Kere  
 Fela: Kure kere yeeee (3ce)

The City or urbanity is an operative metaphor of text-decentering to the extent that it serves as the transpositional impulse of these aesthetics, as has become evident in our discourse of mask performance, divination and possession trance. But further still, nowhere else is this feature more evident than in Fela's lyrical and pictorial narratives. Themes impelled by the city and themes of the city abound in several of his albums: *Bonfo*, *Abiara*, *Shakara*, *Lady*, *Trouble Sleep Yanga Wake Am*, *Go Slow*, *Alagbon Close*, *Morning in Lagos*, *Upside Down*, *Johnny Just Drop*, *Yellow Fever*, and *Zombie*. *Zombie* is a time-marker for Fela and his music, remembering that this title triggered the assault on his Kalakuta Empire and its inhabitants. No doubt, it was one instance of confrontational music.

Other post-*Zombie* titles of the same generic persuasion are "Sorrow, Tears and Blood," "Suffering and Smiling," "Unknown Soldier," "International Thief Thief," "Authority Stealing," "Coffin for Head of State," and "Original Suffer Head."

The most consistent themes explored in the titles include issues of African heritage and "cultural" identity. The inability to define an African personality, Fela says, is the source of corruption in Africa, with the rippling effects on social problems and services such as housing, pollution, electricity and water. The city, as a western prototype, is destructive. Fela's nostalgic call for a return to roots is no doubt an attempt at the romantic; but then, romanticism only to a degree. What Fela essentially questions is the transition from the traditional to the

modern. He is raising the question of an active and interrogating subject. Not one resigned to the white-mask ideology.

Fela neither celebrates the city as an end in itself, as "an archetype of amoral dynamism that awakens no emotion more violently than that of simple awe" (Oates 187). This is hardly surprising since the author simply brings to bear a crucial factor in popular arts which, unlike mass art, has that tendency to problematize the social situations of its audience, and even proffer solutions. The quester, floating balloon and the beast image, are three crucial motifs with which Fela engages the city. The quester, a troubadour of sort, seeks material (at times spiritual) survival in an age of disillusionment. The floating balloon (*Yeye ball*) depicts the lack of an ordering presence in our political and spiritual life, while the beast image, reminiscent of the apocalyptic, transgresses the land, trampling our nurseries and plucking the moon out of our night.

The cosmogony of Fela's lyrical discourse exhibits three discernible chronotopic spaces: the mythic, historic and mytho-historic. His mythic world suspends concretion and reality, in our everyday understanding of the term, even when symbolic representation is employed. It appears to be the most expansive space, allowing for the easiest transgression of time and place by characters. With historic time, concretion and reality take over illusion and fantasy; the time-space markers become known and take the tone of the familiar, unlike the fusion that we get in mytho-historic time-space. Perhaps his most imaginative management of time-space occurs in *I.T.T.* (*International Thief Thief*). The narrative moves from ancestral (mythical) time to historic time, where it collapses time-space in order to achieve what I shall refer to as intra-historic time transition, in the effort to distinguish colonial time from the neo-colonial.

Above all else, however, Fela's practice of *Yabbis*, a no-holds barred dialogic banter between performer and audience on virtually any subject, is a veritable source of satirical aesthetic infusion into counter-culture practice. Fela steers the banter towards the rebellious for after all, as Spivak reveals, the idea of neutral dialogue is an idea which denies history, denies structure, denies the positioning of subjects (Hutnyk et al. 727). The overall strategy here is to make the participants critical, and Fela does occasionally fall victim of the emergent generalized awareness. On this particular Saturday, which was during the heat of the Gulf War of 1991, he had sung "Beast of No Nation" (BONN). The audience did appreciate that the cold war era

was over and called his attention to the need to revise. Thus the original line "East-West block versus West-East block" became "Sadaamuuo versus Kuwaiti." On this occasion, the banter is such that it urges the participant to attain Freire's goal of "a being of praxis".

The overall cognitive influence of the Egba (Fela's dialectal group) satirical form of *efe* on the author is still being researched but, if *yabbis* is a conscious transposition of *efe*, then, the venom has only become more potent. Unlike *efe*, however, *yabbis* respects no season of license, and it is not a female mask performance like *gelede*, which authorizes the license of *efedunng* the *hatojo* season.

The centrifugal power of language is almost literally taken to the leash in Fela's recoinage of standard acronyms. During *Yabbis* sessions in the shrine, he exploits this form to subvert hegemonic constructs by two principal methods. He either heightens the trivial into a grotesque, laughable proportion, or deflates presumed formal categories so that their ordinary, human and natural properties are revealed. In other words, he creates a burlesque scenario, with which he demythologizes the dominant discourse of the ruling elite, while he empowers the marginalized. In a country where the military uniform, as a symbol of the repressive state, is dreaded, Fela emboldens the marginalized in order to deride the uniform in "Fear Not for Man:

Uniform na cloth  
Na tailor dey dew am.

Fela also alters into novel utterance each of the following acronyms: V.I.P. (Very Important Personality), I.T.T. (International Telecommunication), B.C.C. (British Broadcasting Corporation), U.S. (United States), C.O.P. (Cop). The acronyms now become:

V.I.P.: Vagabonds in Power  
I.T.T.: International Thief Thief  
B.C.C.: Big Blind Country  
U.S.: Underground System  
C.O.P.: Country of Pain

Fela negatively reinterprets any acronym that bears a hegemonic reference. This discourse, he carries further with illustrations on album

jackets. He thus disperses alternative aesthetic codes via the channels of calligraphic representation of the printed word, the pictural, figurals of plastic art, but above all through utterance and speech. This reality may be informed by the difficulty posed in attempting graphemic reduction of ritual language text. But even the appreciation of such a text, as Barber has noted, challenges conventional paradigm of textuality.

### Notes

1. The term is Mikhail Bakhtin's. It embraces indeterminacy, fragmentation, decanonization and hybridization: in short as textual representation, it resists formal unities.
2. Quoted in the works cited as Jones, LeRoi.
3. A traditional oriki of *Esu* as quoted by Henry Louis Gates, Jr. in *The Signifying Monkey*.
4. Gates indeed quotes the narrative of the two friends who were thwarted in their friendship by *Esu*. At the heat of their quarrel, he appears and resolves the issue by revealing himself as the source of conflict and thereby playing the dramatic spirit of denouement.

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