"RETURN OF THE IKOI-KOI": MANIFESTATIONS OF LIMINALITY ON NIGERIAN TELEVISION

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Selon Victor Turner, la *liminalité* et la *communitas* peuvent se manifester sous des formes diverses dans la vie culturelle des cités modernes. Cet article examine des instances d'anti-structure dans un feuilleton télévisé observé à Benin City au Nigeria. Dans cette série, dont le thème est "la lutte des classes," "Hotel de Jordan" se moque, entre autres, des hommes riches, des sorciers, et des fonctionnaires. Les auteurs examinent le rôle de la *liminalité* dans l'intrigue, les dialogues et la caractérisation des personnages. En particulier, ils analysent en détail un épisode qui met en jeu les représentations collectives concernant les esprits et les fantômes comme base d'une allégorie de la crise sociale qui aboutit à un coup d'état en Décembre 1983.

As Victor Turner indicated, liminality and communitas may be present in diverse cultural performances in modern cities. This article examines manifestations of anti-structure in a popular television drama series in Benin City, Nigeria, whose theme has been described as "the class struggle." This drama series is titled "Hotel de Jordan," and lampoons, *inter alia*, rich men, native doctors, and government officials. The role of liminality in plot, language, and characterization is explored. There is a detailed analysis of an episode which utilizes collective representations concerning ghosts and shades to construct an allegory for the social drama in Nigeria which culminated in a military coup d'état in December 1983.

Nevertheless the symbolic genres of industrial leisure are analogous, if not homologous, to rituals (particularly their liminal phases) in tribal societies. That is they are similar in function, if not in structure. . . . In other words, they play with the factors of culture, assemble them in random, grotesque, improbable, surprising combinations, just as tribesmen do when they make masks, disguise as monsters, combine many disparate ritual symbols, or invert or parody profane reality. But they do this in a far more complicated way, multiplying genres of artistic and popular

> entertainments, and within each allowing authors, dramatists, painters, sculptors, musicians, folksingers and others lavish scope to generate not only weird forms but also models highly critical of the status quo. Although their style is much more ludic, less culturally constrained, and less subordinated to "the ritual process" than in tribal and agrarian societies, it nevertheless very often has a serious intent. (Turner 1978:282)

INTRODUCTION

In contemporary urban Nigeria, television is rapidly replacing traditional forms of evening entertainment; e.g., the telling of folktales, the singing of traditional songs, and the playing of "moonlight games." Much television programming consists of foreign imports—mainly detective serials, situation comedies, cartoons, and feature films. A good deal of each day's programming is given over to local and network news and current affairs (see Note 1). All of these categories of viewing present interesting problems to social scientists. Anthropologists who are interested in expressive culture may learn a great deal from analysis of yet another type of programming, locally produced drama. It is here that Nigerian writers and performers have the freedom to transform their experience into symbolic statements, and where Nigerian audiences may observe their lives mirrored and transformed by the new technology. In Benin City, the capital of both Bendel State and the old Benin Empire, the most popular Nigerian drama, indeed the most popular television program, is "Hotel de Jordan," a long-running series of hour-length farcical plays featuring a common set of characters.

During the course of our six-month study (see Note 2), some 354 people were asked to name their favorite T.V. program. Two hundred and thirty-one valid responses were received, with 374 preferences being named. Eighty-three informants named "Hotel de Jordan" as a favorite program. The next most popular program, "The Professionals," received thirty-six votes. "Hotel de Jordan" appeals to young and old, women and men, and to members of diverse social classes and different ethnic groups (such as the Edo or Bini, traditional inhabitants of Benin City and its environs, and their erstwhile subjects and neighbors such as the Urhobo, Ishan, Itsekiri, and Bendelite Ibo, many of them migrants to the city). Market women, housewives, schoolchildren, carpenters, mechanics, taxi drivers, shop assistants, casual laborers, technicians, matriarchs, and retired gentlemen all expressed a liking for "Hotel de Jordan." The only negative comments we received about the program were from a few members of the traditional and new élites, a group similar to those in other countries who reject programs which appeal to the mass audience.

To understand the appeal of "Hotel de Jordan" is to understand the social processes unfolding in Southern Nigeria in the period since independence. The program lampoons bureaucrats, corrupt businessmen, wealthy polygynists, traditional rulers, naïve radicals, quack native doctors, and even the military. It gives visibility to the common man, though he is more often depicted as a trickster than as a working-class hero. In fine, "Hotel de Jordan" may be said, in Victor Turner's terms, to exalt anti-structure and to elevate it above structure. Perhaps by that very diversity, the diverse audience of the program may possess one of the few types of communitas which is possible in an urban environment (see Turner 1969:94-165; 1978:280-282).

When asked why they liked "Hotel de Jordan," respondents typically gave brief answers which stressed the local topicality of the program. One representative response was: "It shows what's going on around here." However, other programs which are intended to present Bendelites with images of their city and their state (e.g., local documentaries and interviews with local personalities) are not nearly so popular. In analyzing the special appeal of "Hotel de Jordan," we shall suggest that a modern medium can acquire immense audience loyalty by doing what ritual and folk art have always done: acknowledging the tensions and weaknesses of a community to itself, while restating the underlying social values which must ultimately be upheld. "Hotel de Jordan" does this for the inhabitants of Bendel State, for Nigeria, for Africa, and always and especially, for Benin City.

PLOT, CHARACTER, AND MISE EN SCENE IN "HOTEL DE JORDAN"

Jordan City is Benin City in thin disguise. The fictitious "Hotel de Jordan," whose casino bar is a social center of sorts, provides the setting for much of the action. A typical "Hotel de Jordan" plot involves lampooning the greed and pretensions of one or more rich, influential, and/or arrogant characters, and the defeat of these characters' designs for further self-aggrandizement. These defeats are generally brought about not by concerted and noble actions on the part of the down-trodden, but rather by the often bumbling efforts of the under-class to achieve some material gratifications of their own. Often, the conflict between different manifestations of greed brings about everybody's downfall. For example, in one episode, Chief Ajas, an ignorant, wealthy womanizer (a polygynist in this episode), has worked out a new system for winning the football pools, but because one of his three wives resents the attention Chief Ajas devotes to the pools, the wife burns what turns out to be a winning coupon. While Ajas lies on the sofa in a state of shock after discovering his loss, his wives have a heated altercation with each other. Ajas recovers his *sangfroid* sufficiently to enable him to concentrate on the re-invention of his pools system. He wins again, but his joy is quickly dampened as his wives wrangle over

the division of the spoils. The general buffoonery of the situation is heightened by the fact that two of the wives are played by male actors in female dress, actors who normally play Idemudia, Ajas' servant, and Kokori, Idemudia's ally in various plots to thwart Ajas.

In another episode, Idemudia and Kokori, in their normal male roles, attempt to seduce a beautiful and wealthy young woman, upon whom the middle-aged Ajas has his own designs. In the end, the girl is rescued (and won) by a handsome young journalist after a scuffle between the other contenders for her favors.

In a third episode, this same journalist, who intends to make a scoop by exposing the poor conditions in the local prison, ends up imprisoned himself and abused by the prisoners, who are not the noble sons of the earth he had naïvely imagined them to be. They strip him of his watch, his pen, and his clothing. Their leader is content to be a "big man" within the criminal class and does not take kindly to an intruder who wishes to change the order upon which his status depends.

The general selfishness of all the characters is a consistent theme in "Hotel de Jordan." In one allegorical episode, two rich characters are shown riding two poorer ones like horses, while reading out paeans to democracy from the newspapers. One of the "horses," played by Last Eguavoen (a bank manager named "Dr. Milo Monroe"), utters a continuous stream of Marxist rhetoric. In the end there is a rebellion, but riders and horses merely change places. The structure of the situation is not altered.

While certain unique plots find a place in the memory of the viewers, the audience of "Hotel de Jordan" expect, as do the audience of any soap opera or comedy show, that a certain format will be followed in most episodes of the program. For the most part, they are not disappointed. In three of the six episodes we viewed, the opening scene—a comic interaction between Idemudia and Kokori, in which both characters burst into song—was followed by an interchange in Ajas' living room, in which the chief unknowingly made a fool of himself. The program usually ends with a scene of raucous disorder.

Where stock sequence is not followed, the humor may be embellished by the fact that inhabitants of the imaginary "Jordan City" are themselves acting a role in the program; e.g., Idemudia may be a "horse" or "Ajas' wife." These bridges in characterization ensure that audience expectations are seldom upset.

The program depends heavily upon three popular characters: Idemudia, Kokori, and Ajas. Of these, Idemudia is probably the one most beloved by the audience. The program's director describes Idemudia in these terms:

> Chief Ajas' domestic servant. Incurably superstitious and irrational in his clinging to traditional customs and beliefs. His voice is a wonderful natural asset and comes useful in soothing his master in times of troubles and also in exhorting him in times of self-delusion. (Ihonde 1984:7)

Agbonifo Enaruna, who has played Idemudia since 1974, is a local celebrity. He told us that when he leaves his home or his work as a welder at the University of Benin Medical School Teaching Hospital, children follow his motorcycle, screaming, "Idemudia! Idemudia!"

Despite his stardom and an earlier distinguished career as a folk musician, Enaruna lives unpretentiously in a typical Bini house with his aged mother, two wives, and twelve children, whom he supports by manual labor, not acting. Like Idemudia, Enaruna is the last son of an Edo chief. Since under Edo law, primogeniture is the preferred mode of inheritance, the last son in a large family is likely to be a poor man. As an actor, Enaruna earns no more than the character he plays receives as a houseboy.

Nigerian local television stations operate on very low budgets. The estimated expenditure for writers, actors, and props for an episode of "Hotel de Jordan" is five hundred *naira* (abbreviated as N; at that time $850.00 in Canadian funds). A leading actor in "Hotel de Jordan" earns forty naira an episode. The script writer will earn eighty naira a script. In consequence, writers and actors cannot support themselves by these trades. They either have other full-time jobs at the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA), or work outside of television. The lack of a good outside broadcast-ing camera means that rushes of outdoor sequences shot at various locations in Benin City are re-used for many different shows.

The stage sets used in "Hotel de Jordan" are simple and inexpensive: a few pieces of living room furniture in front of a "wall," in which there is a painted facsimile of a door; a barroom at a hotel with but one table and a few cheap chairs. There is no attempt to create an illusion of reality.

In an article on cinema in Nigeria, Wole Soyinka has suggested that a lack of illusion imposed on Nigerian (or indeed any nation's) theater by technical or financial constraints may make it easier to impart social messages because the audience is not allowed to indulge in escapism, and the producer is not dependent upon those who might pay the piper and therefore call the tune (Soyinka 1979:89-102).

Both "Hotel de Jordan" and another more serious Nigerian Television Authority program, "Bendel Playhouse," draw heavily on the folk tradition for plots; ghosts, witches, and herbalists are

not strangers to the screen. In this sense, "Hotel de Jordan" is a people's program. As Oritsagbemi Slater, who plays the casino manager in "Hotel de Jordan" and directs television dramas, remarked, the reason why so much television drama in Benin City remains so close to the folk tradition is that the actors, writers, and directors are themselves a product of it.

JORDAN CITY/BENIN CITY

To non-natives, Benin City is known for its brasses, bronzes, and ivories; its divine kings or Obas; and its once-great empire. Today, the traditional arts and crafts still flourish, and the Oba still reigns in his palace, albeit with reduced authority. Benin City now has approximately half a million inhabitants. It is the traditional home of the Edo proper, or Bini. A number of related groups, such as the Ishan and Urhobo, live in Bendel State, as do such non-Edo populations as the Itsekiri of the Delta area and a strong Ibo component in the areas adjacent to the Niger River. There are now substantial non-Edo minorities in Benin City itself, including migrants from other states and representatives of all the groups in Bendel State. Bendelites often describe their state as a "mini-Nigeria," so diverse is its ethnic composition and so profound are its ethnic tensions.

Trade of every description is the most conspicuous feature of Benin City as citizens go about the pressing business of earning a living. There are busy markets, large and small supermarkets, street stands and tiny shops, and numerous street hawkers. Motorists stuck in congested traffic are pressured by vendors offering chewing gum, biscuits, washcloths, toys, hats, and toilet paper. Petty trading is an avenue by which almost anyone can earn a little money, although competition is intense and profit margins are low. Some Bendelites are employed in light manufacturing which uses the products of the rain forest, lumber and rubber. Small workshops make and sell hand-crafted furniture, and small factories produce tissue products. The repair of appliances and automobiles provides an opportunity for many small entrepreneurs. State government and such public institutions as schools and hospitals, as well as a major federal university (the University of Benin, which includes both a medical school and a teaching hospital), are important both for the employment they provide and the amenities they offer. Several large breweries and bottling plants are also major employers.

Most native Edo proper or Bini still have farms in one of the village communities surrounding Benin City and visit them regularly. Even those residents of Benin City who are members of the Ishan and Urhobo ethnic groups frequently commute to their farms on weekends. Although relatives may provide some produce for those without farms of their own (yams, cassava, fruit, and vegetables), the landless and those who have come to Benin City

from more distant parts of Bendel State and Nigeria are totally dependent on the urban cash economy.

A large number of the inhabitants of Benin City are still employed in domestic service as nannies, cooks, night watchmen, and cleaners. A growing, small minority have no jobs at all.

The director of "Hotel de Jordan," Jonathan Ihonde, who wrote many of the scripts for the earlier programs, has said that Jordan City could be anywhere in Africa (Ihonde 1984:5). Indeed, this could be so, for Jordan City's problems are those of many Nigerian cities, and much that is true of Nigeria is also true of much of post-independence Africa. However, shots of easily recognizable Benin landmarks, the occasional use of Edo, and the employment of the local variety of pidgin as the main language of the program afford Benin City residents a greater sense of affinity with Jordanians than can be enjoyed by residents of other localities.

Jonathan Ihonde has stated that the central concern in "Hotel de Jordan" is class struggle (ibid.). He himself was at the time state chairman of the Nigerian Labor Congress. In daily life in Benin City, inequality in income and access to amenities is a constant subject of discussion and angry comment. A number of informants commented on the unfair advantages enjoyed by the "big men" at the expense of the "common man" (these are the actual terms employed).

The economic plight of the lower classes in Nigeria was exacerbated by the end of the oil boom in 1981 and extraordinary inflation in the prices of basic staples such as yams, cassava, rice, soap, and cooking oil. In fact, the inflation rate for products of this kind has exceeded the rate of inflation in the price of luxury goods. Cutbacks in public spending hurt the poor more than the rich: public hospitals have few drugs, public schools lack necessary equipment, and power and water are available to most consumers on an unpredictable and irregular basis. Meanwhile, the rich use local and foreign private schools and hospitals and possess their own generators and boreholes.

A successful professional man or local businessman in Nigeria will earn (often substantially) over 10,000 naira ($17,000.00 in Canadian funds) a year; pay very little tax; gain quite a great deal in unofficial commissions; possess a Peugeot or a Mercedes; have a well-appointed house in the Government Reservation Area along with a staff of servants; and own a large color television, a stereo, and frequently, a video recorder and air conditioner.

By contrast, a servant will earn N120-200 per month for a sixty- to eighty-hour week. A junior civil servant will earn N200-300 per month, while a petty trader will earn N150 per

month, although many well-established market women earn much more than this. Given Nigerian prices, which by any available standards of comparison are double to triple those in North America and Western Europe, these figures speak for themselves.

It is notable that, despite all the comments we heard concerning these inequalities, there is no strong proletarian movement in Nigeria and no socialist party has ever had a national base. Class consciousness is therefore incipient at best in the urban areas, and is often submerged by ethnic rivalries. An Ishan taxi driver expressed contempt for the "big men," but identified them with the Edo élite despite the fact that his own brother was a rich businessman.

THE TELEVISION AUDIENCE IN BENIN CITY: WHO'S WATCHING?

"Hotel de Jordan" is produced by the Nigerian Television Authority in Benin City, or NTA (Benin). The station has been in existence since 1973, and the program also dates back to that year. There are currently two television stations in Benin City: NTA (Benin), which has been a federal station since 1976, and BTV (Bendel Television), which was created by the Bendel State government in late 1981.

The television audience in Benin City has grown immensely in the past few years. Katz and Wedell report that as late as the early 1970s, there was only one television to approximately 1,000 Nigerians (Katz and Wedell 1978:Table A4). Later Nigerian statistics indicate a quick growth in viewership.

Approximately seventy-five percent of our informants had access to television; slightly under sixty percent had television in their own households. Our interview data show that fifty-two percent of T.V. households had acquired their television sets during the years 1979-1984 (see Note 3). In one compound we visited in the center of Benin City, which was occupied by one extended family and its tenants, there were sixty people and fourteen television sets. Occupations of the family heads included such ordinary trades as carpentry and automobile body repair. Artisans and skilled workers tend to have bought television sets (mainly small black-and-white receivers) since 1979; all the sets in the household described above had been acquired during this period. This fact is significant, because survey data for the late seventies (Ikime 1979:57) show that the television audience at that time was predominantly upper-middle-class.

Because the availability of television to the nonélite is so recent, when "Hotel de Jordan" was first produced, it did not reach many members of the audience for which it was intended, and who are now its most loyal fans. Television is still unavailable

to most of the rural population in Bendel State. Those villages which have T.V. reception tend to be more involved in the money economy and/or closer to the city than those without television. Perhaps for this reason, the few rural viewers we interviewed liked "Hotel de Jordan" very much.

THE RETURN OF THE IKOI-KOI: THE SHADES VISIT JORDAN CITY

At 8:00 p.m. on February 11, 1984, the Ikoi-Koi, "ghosts" or "vampires," whose faces were painted white, returned to Jordan City and were seen on Benin City television in an episode of "Hotel de Jordan" titled "Return of the Ikoi-Koi." Because of financial hardship, "Return of the Ikoi-Koi" was the only new episode of "Hotel de Jordan" to be presented between Christmas 1983 and early April 1984. On other Saturday evenings, repeat episodes were shown, and "Return of the Ikoi-Koi" was shown a second time in March. It has proven to be extremely popular. When we saw it on February 11, 1984, our children and ourselves were four in an audience of fifty seated before a television screen in a home in Oluko village, ten miles north of Benin City. We were thus simultaneously able to view both the program and the audience.

On December 31, 1983, an event not unrelated to the "Return of the Ikoi-Koi" occurred in Nigeria. After fifty-one months of civilian government, the military had reestablished power through a coup d'état. "Return of the Ikoi-Koi" was intended and widely understood to be an allegory concerning these recent political circumstances. As we shall see, the personnel, content, structure, and function of "Return of the Ikoi-Koi" bear a number of similarities to traditional masquerades in Bendel State communities. Such masquerades belong to a performance genre which incorporates most of the classic elements of anti-structure (see Turner 1969:94-165).

In "Return of the Ikoi-Koi," the Ikoi-Koi appear in the bush, outside banks, in petrol stations, and in Chief Ajas' home, frightening both the poor (Idemudia and Kokori) and the rich (Ajas and his circle of friends). The casino manager of the Hotel de Jordan appears in Ajas' living room disguised as a wild young man with Rastafarian hair. By his disguise, he suggests that one may frustrate the Ikoi-Koi. Accordingly, the poor parade as big men, while the rich pretend to be their servants. Captain Nnamonu, head of Jordan City's security organization, proclaims on television that rumors of the return of the Ikoi-Koi are false. Ajas and his friends celebrate the disappearance of the Ikoi-Koi, and resume their corrupt dealings. Their happy negotiations are frustrated by a false reappearance of the Ikoi-Koi (a joke by Idemudia and Kokori). Immediately thereafter, the whole

cast is reduced to a state of trembling, incoherent idiocy by the reappearance of the "real" Ikoi-Koi.

EPISODIC DETAIL AND CHARACTERIZATION

In the first scene of "Return of the Ikoi-Koi," the Ikoi-Koi appear in the forest. Their frightening appearance is enhanced by music and sound effects. There is an opening drum roll. After twenty seconds, the drums are joined by wind and electrical instruments. The opening sequence lasts three minutes.

Idemudia and the hunchback Kokori appear on the screen, clearing farmland in the forest. They sing a farming song in the Edo language ("A gha y'ugbo do," or "If one goes to the farm"), and discuss their plans to plant plantains. The Ikoi-Koi appear; Idemudia and Kokori quit the forest in fright.

In the next scene, Ajas is talking to his girlfriend in his living room. He announces that he is about to clear some farmland and asks his girlfriend to serve them both drinks. He promises that he will give both the girlfriend's mother and sister rights to the produce of certain farmland, but refuses his girlfriend's request for her own rights to such produce. Would a tortoise try to remove the load (the tortoise's shell) from his back? Ajas claims that his girlfriend is his property and the two of them are like a snail and its shell. Any property he acquires will automatically be hers. In the end, he relents and gives her a large allotment.

All of the above statements are rendered in a denser pidgin than that of most of the other characters. Hilarity greeted some of Ajas' utterances. Not only is the pidgin Ajas uses thick; it is bad pidgin, replete with idiosyncrasies or catch-phrases such as "You hear me so?", with comical trips of the tongue ("skita" for "sister"; "miskate" for "mistake"), and with inelegant grammatical flaws ("you's" for the vocative "you"). It is the coarse language of a coarse man who is a buffoon despite himself; although he has acquired much wealth, he will never acquire social panache.

Having reluctantly agreed to give his girlfriend some yams, Ajas goes on to state his political and economic philosophy, thus allowing the script writer to lampoon the big man who preaches democracy while avidly pursuing his own advantage. This sequence is an exposé of the inherent contradiction of democracy—the contradiction between the doctrine of equality for all and the premium placed on individual liberty, including the liberty to advance one's own interests at the expense of others. Ajas advises his girlfriend not to sell her newly promised yams in the marketplace. It seems he believes that the interests of the masses are best served when he himself is the sole dealer in

yams. If we believe Ajas' self-styled "recitation for democracy," it would appear that the interests of all are joined in him:

> And I say. I quote:
>
> "Democracy is here de government of de peoples by de peoples and for de peoples." And if I bring am for dis yam matter now, democracy go meany . . . em . . . yez . . . y'. . . y' . . . yams of de peoples, by de peoples and for de peoples. Now "of de people" mean to say now de people here get de yam. Dere "by de people" mean to say now de people dey struggle dig de yam from de ground. And "for de people" he mean to say de people must bring de yams for Chief Ajasi, and Chief Ajasi go sell am again for de masses. Yeh, for de masses.

This speech is an elaboration of a remark he has made a few minutes earlier in response to his girlfriend's suggestion that a farmer with a family to feed might face hardship if he released his yams to Chief Ajas:

> . . . de farmer no be masses, so derefore de farmer he also buy from Chief Ajas.

An important tenet of democratic jurisprudence also comes in for some twisting here—the notion of equality before the law. Asked what would happen if the farmer refused to part with his yams, Ajas waxes indignant; indeed, he almost forgets the right word for such a farmer's heinous selfishness:

> Na sabo . . . sabo . . . sabo . . . SABOTAGE . . . straightaway arrest for jail.

The government which came to power with the December 31, 1983 coup justified its suspension of democracy mainly on the grounds that the politicians had allowed hoarding and corruption to place essential commodities beyond the reach of the ordinary man. Thus, linking a defense of hoarding with a defense of democracy served to establish "Return of the Ikoi-Koi" as a commentary on current events. However, one must bear in mind that Ajas has been a central character in "Hotel de Jordan" since long before the coup, and that the audience laughs at his utterances partly because these utterances are what Chief Ajas is expected to say. His rhetoric encapsulates all that is comic in his character.

Humor, according to Gregory Bateson (1969), brings forward elements of a social field which are normally relegated to the background. In his ignorance, Ajas flaunts what big men who are more clever take pains to conceal. He will retain his capacity to draw laughter for longer than "Return of the Ikoi-koi" will retain its specific topicality—indeed, he will retain this capacity for as long as certain truths about social relations are

hidden behind the customary attempts of "big men" to justify their actions.

Chief Ajas' discourse on democracy is followed by a brief episode in which the Ikoi-Koi appear in the streets of Jordan City, spreading terror among their beholders and arousing laughter in the television audience. A frightened crowd begins to gather in Ajas' house:

> Tell me now. Wetin [what] you see? IKOI-KOI!

Outside, the Ikoi-Koi appear in a parking lot, where they pursue the assistant bank manager, Gberegedegberu (a deliberate tongue-twister of a name), a corrupt petty capitalist who is always plotting against his boss, the Marxist Dr. Milo Monroe. In the next scene, Gberegedegberu joins a crowd gathered a few days later in Ajas' house. The crowd also includes Ajas' friend and rival, Chief Igho, whose name means "money" in the Edo language, and various other local personalities.

Gberegedegberu announces that he is ready for death. He can no longer bear "the mortal agony—the mental torment—the gruesome experience and the excruciating feeling." He calls upon his tormentors:

> Ikoi-Koi! Come take my life! Come take my life! For four days this body has seen no rest. For four days these eyes have seen no sleep.

The audience is no longer listening to pidgin; instead it is hearing a melodramatic speech in the English prescribed by the literature examiners of the West African Examinations Council. Gberegedegberu may indeed impress his fellow Jordanians with his erudition; to the viewer who has witnessed this manipulation of language in real life, his flowery version of it is comically pretentious.

The gathering is stirred by the sensational entrance of Hotel de Jordan's casino manager, Dr. Ibn Mujid, a trickster known for his love of women, gambling, and profanity. He informs Ajas and his friends that they should no longer fear the Ikoi-Koi because, as he confidently asserts, the Ikoi-Koi can be tricked:

> Ikoi-Koi knows me here on earth-i only by the image-i of my other self-i in the world beyond me . . . you can deceive it.
>
> You can deceive am?
>
> Change-i. Change your appearance-i. Change your status-i. Change everything about you-i.

True to his word, Mujid is disguised in a Rastafarian wig and is wearing corduroy pants with a conspicuous patch on the crotch. His speech has also acquired a peculiarity which it does not normally have.

Mujid's suggestions are implemented forthwith. Ajas and Igho reappear in cheap leisure suits as the chauffeurs of Volkswagens. Their servants, Idemudia and Kokori, don the agbadas (native robes) of the rich, and delight in insulting their bosses and sending them off on petty errands:

> Driver! Igho! Foolish driver! Look-e, head like a cocoyam.

Ajas and Igho assert their changed identities:

> Tell Ikoi-Koi, say you be big man. You be Chief Igho. I be driver. I no be Ajas.

Alarmed by the unrest in the town, the Mayor's Security Officer, Captain Nnamonu, appears on Jordan City's television screens and delivers a speech that is a parody of the broadcasts by senior military officers which have become a regular feature of evening television in Nigeria since the 1983 coup. On two occasions, we watched Benin City audiences greet this event with hilarity (see Note 4). The speech reassures the public that the Ikoi-Koi are not present in Jordan City and warns "fellow Jordanians" that they will be "summarily dealt with" should they perpetuate the rumors of the Ikoi-Koi's appearance. Some of the confusion ascribed to the citizenry's fear of the Ikoi-Koi is reminiscent of the conditions which obtained during the five-day curfew following the coup:

> All activities grind to a halt at 6:00 p.m. daily as people rush to get home before dark.

Captain Nnamonu's advice to the residents of Jordan City is identical to that which concluded Brigadier Abacha's announcement of the coup:

> All are advised to be law-abiding and to go about their normal business peacefully. Goodnight.

Meanwhile, the tactic of disguise appears to have succeeded: the Ikoi-Koi no longer haunt Ajas and his friends. The incompetent native doctor Okhue boasts that he is responsible for the Ikoi-Koi's final disappearance:

> I kill dis one! I kill dis one! I kill am!

The delighted Ajas announces that from now on Okhue will be known by the title "Professor." The corrupt assistant bank manag-

er, Gberegedegberu, is heard saying to someone, "Meet me in my office for a loan."

The return of normality is brief. The Ikoi-Koi reappear. Their first reappearance is a trick by Idemudia and Kokori. The cast barely has time to recover from this jest when the real Ikoi-Koi enter the room.

Throughout most of this performance, anti-structure has reigned triumphant. In the pages that follow, we shall analyze more fully some of the devices by which the atmosphere of anti-structure is created and maintained.

"HOTEL DE JORDAN" AND THE LANGUAGE OF ANTI-STRUCTURE

In "The Return of the Ikoi-Koi," no less than in other episodes of "Hotel de Jordan," the characters' use of language is crucial in defining their relationships to each other and to the audience. Although Idemudia and Kokori sing in the Edo langauge, they speak the ordinary pidgin English of the masses in Bendel State, a pidgin which is intelligible to most inhabitants of Southern Nigeria. Ajas speaks a garbled pidgin, which gives the lie to all his posturing. Most educated members of the Nigerian bourgeoisie, including government officials, speak Nigerian Standard English in public and often in private, sometimes with idiosyncrasies appropriate to their roles—e.g., the florid literary pretentiousness of Gberegedegberu in this episode. However, most of the dialogue in all episodes of "Hotel de Jordan" is in Bendelite pidgin.

"Hotel de Jordan" is one of relatively few radio and television programs in Benin City which make substantial use of Bendelite pidgin English. All told, not more than two percent of air-wave time in Benin City is occupied by programs in Bendelite pidgin, despite the fact that pidgin is the most widely understood language in Southern Nigeria.

Significantly, pidgin is not used for broadcasting the news, despite repeated proposals to introduce it. One news announcer told us that he would feel "silly" reading the news in pidgin. In the print media, pidgin is almost entirely relegated to two contexts: the satirical and the sexual. Serious newspapers, whether local or national, use pidgin captions for political cartoons. The salacious Friday newspaper, *Lagos Weekend*, prints a column in pidgin which is usually even more risqué than the rest of the paper. *Ikebe Super*, a humorous magazine that appeals to prurient adolescents throughout Southern Nigeria, consists of comic strips and photographic stories captioned in pidgin.

Why is a language which is deemed unsuitable for news broadcasting an ideal vehicle for social satire and sexual ribaldry?

There are many mutually intelligible local varieties of Nigerian pidgin English. When spoken, the various pidgins are sufficiently different from Standard English that they are incomprehensible to an untrained listener. Furthermore, pidgins are not accepted as authentic languages by either the Nigerian élite or the educational establishment. To hold any nonmanual job in government or modern business, or to be admitted to an institution of higher learning, one must speak Standard English. Pidgin has low social status, and those educated even to the primary level find something inherently comic about it.

Even those who do not speak Standard English, and who may be more fluent in pidgin than in the their vernacular, reserve pidgin for certain contexts. For example, pidgin is used in the market and in the street, but would not be used in addressing the ancestors or elders. Under no circumstances would an Edo greet the Oba (divine king) in pidgin!

Nonetheless, pidgin is the language of choice in certain circumstances, even though Standard English and a vernacular may be equally available to the speakers. An American-trained university lecturer told us that when he relaxes with educated friends who speak the same vernacular as he does, everyone habitually uses pidgin because "pidgin is the language we use when we feel warm and comfortable with each other." A seemingly opposite use of pidgin was also observed in offices and shops where formal communications in Standard English may be switched to pidgin when a disagreement erupts. Thus, diglossic "code switching" from Nigerian Standard English or vernacular to pidgin indicates a change from formality to informality, from impersonality to personal engagement, from low affect to high affect, and from hierarchy to equality. Pidgin is not the language of *gesellschaft*. For that very reason, it is the ideal language for anti-structure.

THE USES OF ANTI-STRUCTURE IN "HOTEL DE JORDAN": COMEDY AND MASQUERADE

The opening sequences of "Return of the Ikoi-Koi" presented a contrast between the labor of Idemudia and Kokori on their little plots of land and the schemes of the corrupt Ajas to cheat the populace of their labor. Such is the structure of life in Jordan City. The casino manager's scheme resembles the ritual role reversals which so fascinated Victor Turner (see, for instance, 1969:166-203). The shades have visited Jordan City. To escape their wrath, the rich must wear the clothes and adopt the roles of the poor. The poor act like big men and insult the rich. However, there is no successful movement out of liminality, because the Ikoi-Koi return (see Note 5).

Parody, like inversion and lampooning, is a frequent component of the liminal condition. All three elements, as well as other features of liminality such as fear, a blurring of the border between the natural and the supernatural, and a certain amount of sexual horseplay, are present in "Return of the Ikoi-Koi" (see Turner 1967).

Masking of all kinds is, of course, frequently associated with liminality. The Ikoi-Koi wear white paint on their faces and the Bendelites laugh at these "spirits," whose name in the Edo language means "I pound yam," a homely and largely feminine activity. However, members of the viewing audience do not laugh at their own ghosts and masqueraders any more than the characters in "Hotel de Jordan" laugh at the Ikoi-Koi. We may better understand the significance of the "liminoid" Ikoi-Koi to the Benin City audience if we comprehend the role which is traditionally and currently played by liminars in the social dramas of the region.

Religious pluralism is now as strong a feature of life in Benin City as ethnic diversity. Traditional Edo religion and the worship of ancestors and the Oba still flourish, as do Catholicism, Baptism, Aladura, Islam, and a number of pentecostal sects, including Bishop Bensen Idahosa's Church of God Mission. Whatever religion an inhabitant of Benin City may profess, he or she is likely to believe in the existence of a supernatural realm inhabited by witches and ghosts, whose intervention in daily life is a social fact. There are, of course, skeptics, including some members of the educated elite and some adherents of the more "Western" religious groups. The views of the majority were repeatedly brought home to us in conversations with friends and informants. For obvious reasons, we are more concerned here with ghosts than with witches.

In traditional Edo belief, there is an opposition between "Agbon" and "Erinmwin," the earth and the spirit world, the living and the dead. The solemn and regular worship of ancestors was formerly the main religion of the Edo people. This worship was and still is a manifestation of structure rather than of anti-structure. There are occasions upon which the spirits of the dead appear to challenge structure. Following their deaths, men who die without sons or who do not live to become members of the *edion* (collective elders of a village) become *ighele-erinmwin*, members of the spirits' *ighele*, the age-grade which precedes elderhood. These spirits hinder the progress of the souls of members of the *edion* on their way to the spirit world, and are often revealed by diviners to be influencing human affairs on occasions when elders behave inappropriately or when members of the living *ighele* threaten the authority of the elders (Bradbury 1973:249). Bradbury observes that offerings are made to appease the *ighele-erinmwin* on such occasions, and that these offerings are secretly cast away at night, often at crossroads in the bush,

in the manner employed for offerings made to appease witches and enemies (ibid.). Bradbury suggests that beliefs concerning *ighele-erinmwin* are a projection into the spirit world of a general resentment in Edo society by relatively junior males against the powerful elders, and that these beliefs represent an unspoken resentment of sons toward their fathers which is beneath the more manifest grievances of *ighele* members against the *edion*. This category of Edo spirits is thus viewed as supernatural agents of rebellion against authority.

Members of the *ighele-erinmwin* collect offerings by night along lonely bush paths—just the sort of spot where the Ikoi-Koi first frighten Idemudia and Kokori. Though these representatives of the powerless are the first to be frightened by the Ikoi-Koi, later in this episode of "Hotel de Jordan," it is their social superiors who are most terrified, and who assume identities similar to those of Idemudia and Kokori in order to escape.

The Ikoi-Koi are not, of course, masqueraders any more than they are actual members of *ighele-erinmwin*, but the social function they perform in Jordan City is not dissimilar to that of masked *erinmwin* at a number of festivals and other occasions in the villages around Benin City, and, indeed, in non-Edo areas throughout Nigeria.

The most prominent of the masquerades in the Edo villages near Benin City is that performed by members of the *Ovia* cult (see Bradbury 1973:185-209; Ben-Amos 1980:52-57). Ovia herself is a character in Edo folklore who is typical of Edo village cult deities:

> . . . also worshipped are rebel warriors and fugitive queens who fled the court into the countryside and there transformed themselves into features of the environment: rivers, lakes, and hills. (Ben-Amos 1980:57)

According to Bradbury, Ovia herself was a wife of the king of Oyo, who fled the palace because of jealousy in the harem and was transformed into a river (Bradbury 1973:87-88).

With very rare exceptions, cult masquerades such as *Ovia* are not allowed within Benin City. They represent rural rebellion as opposed to urban power; yet, paradoxically, the purpose of such cults is to restore order to villages by disturbing routine.

In numerous ways, *Ovia* resembles many male cults in Africa. The men go into seclusion; the women cannot visit them and are subject to a number of taboos. The bull-roarer is used. At various times the *erinmwin*, the spirits of heroic elders of the village, impersonated by spectacularly masked men, perform their dances in the village before the houses of prominent villagers.

At certain points in *Ovia*, the masqueraders wander around the villages receiving gifts. Through them, Ovia may be asked to convey blessings of long life and prosperity; to harm witches, sorcerers, jealous co-wives, women who sought to make their husbands impotent, and, indeed, all who are guilty of any anti-social behavior. The notion that the masqueraders restore social calm by cursing those who wish to spoil the village (ibid.) is of paramount importance. Quarrelling is banned during *Ovia*.

We asked one informant whether masqueraders enter village communities on any occasion other than the performance of such cult ceremonies as *Ovia*. In reply, she cited a case in Oluko village north of Benin City where a masquerade was used to settle a property dispute. The *erinmwin* called the contestants to order, and peace was restored to the village.

Some time in 1982, fifty percent of the goats disappeared from Oluko village. The *erinmwin* came in the night. Men and boys went out to see them. The *erinmwin* cursed the thieves, and then returned to the underworld. Two weeks later, three men in the village died. It was believed that these three men were the thieves.

We asked our informant whether there was a general notion that the spirits could act to redress wrongs on earth, and she answered that there was. Would an Edo be able and willing to place the actions of the fictional Ikoi-Koi into such a social context? There is evidence to think so.

The Ikoi-Koi were not, of course, real spirits; the purpose of the television program "Return of the Ikoi-koi" was to comment on the 1983 military coup d'état. In a previous program, which we had not seen, the Ikoi-Koi had forced Ajas, Idemudia, and others to confess their sins, and had then withdrawn. So, too, did the military withdraw when civilian rule was reestablished in 1979. Now the military (Ikoi-Koi) had returned because civilian rule had failed, corruption was rife, and the rich had swallowed the riches of the nation.

THE 1983 MILITARY COUP AS SOCIAL DRAMA

The December 31, 1983 military coup and events leading up to it, as they are understood in Nigeria, are in fact very similar in structure to a Turnerian social drama. Social dramas, as Turner describes them, typically proceed through four stages. A breach of norm-governed social relations is followed by a phase of mounting crisis. Eventually, some redressive action is taken, after which community re-integration may be achieved. Alternatively, there may be some "social recognition and legitimization

of irreparable schism between the contesting parties" (Turner 1957:11-92; 1974:37-42).

Nigeria's current economic woes date from the collapse of the oil boom in 1981. The impact of the economic crisis on ordinary Nigerians has intensified since the imposition of austerity measures by the civilian government in 1982.

This period from 1982 to December 31, 1983 was certainly one of mounting crisis. During the autumn of 1983, the question for many Nigerians was not whether there was going to be a coup d'état, but when.

Although world economic conditions, especially a decline in the price of oil, were partly to blame for the Nigerian economic crisis both before and after the coup, the attention of both the public and the press was focused largely on admittedly widespread corruption. There was continual talk about the amount of money that had been illegally removed from the economy through bribery, currency trafficking, and hoarding. A further breach in norm-governed social relations was occasioned by the 1983 general elections, which most Bendelites believed were extensively rigged. Instigators of the December 31, 1983 coup were thus able to claim successfully that they were indeed taking redressive social action, and the greeting during the first weeks of January 1984 was "Happy New Year and Happy New Government!"

However, re-integration seems unlikely in the near future, and public acknowledgment of irretrievable schism is not easily resorted to in a modern nation-state, although the Biafran secessionists tried to force such acknowledgment in 1967. Many Nigerians anticipate military coups and counter-coups at fairly regular intervals for the foreseeable future, as has indeed been the case over the past twenty years when there have been eight (not all successful) military coups, and two forms of civilian government. What is relevant to this analysis is both the cyclical nature of the changes in Nigerian government and the insistence that personal violations of social norms are responsible for Nigeria's problems. This suggests that a model of Turnerian social drama, or something very much like it, provides a pattern by which political upheavals are interpreted by Nigerians. Insofar as the pattern described is not exclusive to Nigeria, or even to Africa, it is possible that certain paradigms concerning guilt and community redress may retain considerable power in many parts of the world where village politics are, or have recently been, the major arena for political action. The elements of mounting crisis, individual misconduct, and impermanence of resolution are all present in "Return of the Ikoi-Koi," and are intended as an allegorical representation of the coup on December 31, 1983.

Both the 1983 Nigerian coup and the television program, "Return of the Ikoi-Koi," brought imperfections in the social

order into sharp focus. These social imperfections have long been present, and will continue to be so, but were submerged during the intervals between crises. This is perhaps the most important characteristic which the program and the events which led up to it share with the social dramas of traditional African villages.

CONCLUSION

Like all social events, "Hotel de Jordan" has many meanings. The meaning of such an event for a social actor depends, of course, on the actor's place in the social structure. The outsider can interpret those meanings according to his or her disciplinary or political perspective. Students of mass communications may view "Hotel de Jordan" as an interesting development in "indigenous" programing and a model for those who wish to reject cultural imperialism. Students of drama will observe that many of the conventions of farce are observed, including stock characters, errors in language, and the reduction of the numinous to the bizarre. Anthropologists and folklorists also have their own perspectives. The writers of "Hotel de Jordan" have reassembled elements from ritual and folklore into a new bricolage. This is no mere antiquarianism. The traditions on which these writers draw are still alive in the minds of the people, just as witches and ghosts were to Shakespeare's audiences.

The power of "Hotel de Jordan" lies in its humor. Like the trickster, the griot, and the court jester, the characters in "Hotel de Jordan" make negative statements about social hierarchy and reveal the moral improprieties and injustices which underlay routine social action. Although the emotional burden of such statements may not always be easy to decipher, we can make observations about their nature. The source of this humor is not so much what is said, but the way it is said, who says it, and when it is said. The statements themselves are conventional ways of describing the negative features of everyday life in a Nigerian city. Such negative collective representations (Lyons 1978) are a perhaps misunderstood genre of social action. One of the present authors has suggested that the sociology of knowledge must expand to encompass the study of social conventions by which the imperfections of a society are articulated. The work of Victor Turner was a breakthrough in this undertaking.

The late Richard Dorson (1972:66-67) viewed African folklore as the product of people barred by their status from cultural dominance; e.g., women and the young. Historically, African folklore occurred in a situation where the potential for class or proto-class conflict was certainly present. In Dorson's sense, "Hotel de Jordan" is folklore on television. The plots may be "new," but the material and themes conform to social expectations.

"Return of the Ikoi-Koi" is not a play about ritual, but rather a play on ritual themes. The established structure involves hierarchy and the exploitation of the masses by Ajas. The shades visit Jordan City and effect, as they do in ritual, a reversal of roles so that in the liminal stage of the dramatic action, the rich are humbled, the poor are exalted, and communitas is established between them insofar as they must cooperate to deceive the Ikoi-Koi. The equation between the military and the shades is simply made—they are frightening, socially necessary, yet comically brutal. In the last scenes of the play, the original social structure is re-established, only to disintegrate again in the final moments.

The differences between traditional village ritual and television "ritual" drama are also significant. The shades in *Ovia* wear elaborate and distinct regalia, curse effectively, and requite real wrongs. In popular belief, ghosts are not content merely to chase and terrify miscreants. The Ikoi-Koi belong to no particular village, but are instead generic ancestor figures. Their very name indicates their comic function. Above all, real ritual has no fourth stage immediately following re-incorporation in which the liminal, the anti-structural, re-emerges. Such events are permissible in farce. The audience of "Hotel de Jordan" is well aware of the ritual themes which Ikoi-Koi embody. It also knows that the spirits cannot return every time a social wrong occurs.

Our reading of "Return of the Ikoi-Koi" is based on our study of the play as a social fact; as the product of ritual, oral tradition, and contemporary events; and as the product of the mutual understandings and inter-subjective experience of writers, producers, actors, and audience. This inter-subjective experience is articulated through certain cultural templates. The success of "Hotel de Jordan" as a popular drama reflects its writers' ability to manipulate such templates for a new medium.

NOTES

Acknowledgments. Our research was financed by a Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada Strategic Grant on the Human Impact of Science and Technology. We are grateful to Dr. Ayodele Ogundipe, Head, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, University of Benin, for allowing us to work as Research Associates of her department. Ivie Erhahon and Ade Abdu-Muyib acted ably as both research assistants and informants. Mr. Joseph Igbinigie, Assistant Chief Technical Officer for the Nigerian Television Authority in Benin City (NTA Benin), made audio and video tapes of "Return of the Ikoi-Koi" for us. We would also like to thank Mr. Rowland Ifidon (General Manager of NTA Benin), Mr. Oritsagbemi Slater, and Mr. Paul Omoruyi (NTA Benin). Agbonifo Enaruna (Idemudia) gave us a valuable interview. Chief

Nosa Idubor Isekhure gave us valuable assistance in his dual role as an expert on Bini tradition and a student of mass communications. We would like to thank the Oba of Benin City, Omo N'Oba N'Edo Uku Akpolokpolo Erediauwa I, for giving his approval to our research. We would also like to thank Dan Ben-Amos of the University of Pennsylvania and Paula Ben-Amos of the University of Indiana for their friendship and sage advice. Finally, we would like to thank the many citizens of Benin City who allowed us into their homes and workplaces and took the time to answer our questions.

1. At the time of our study, there were approximately six and one-half hours of programming in Benin City on weekdays, and eleven hours per day on weekends.

2. The research on which this article is based was conducted over a six-month period between November 1, 1983 and May 1, 1984 in Benin City, Nigeria. Our methodology involved a series of interviews with personnel at the two television and two radio stations in Benin City, interviews and more informal conversations with some of the local "media celebrities," and about 350 unstructured interviews conducted in the streets and markets of Benin City. We also visited homes in the city and in nearby villages, and enjoyed the hospitality of several kind families. We visited a public viewing center in the village of Ehor, watched others watch television, and watched others watching us watch television. Above all else, we participated, insofar as we were able to do so, in the daily life of a busy city.

3. N=119.

4. The authors had the opportunity to hear Captain Nnamonu's address in the presence of a Benin audience for a second time on April 23, 1984, at "Top Stage '84," a benefit performance on behalf of Nigerian Television Authority (Benin) in Benin City.

5. One assumes that in a subsequent episode, Ajas and company will be back unscathed, and up to their old tricks. As Turner remarked, "If the liminality of life-crisis rites may be, perhaps audaciously, compared to tragedy—for both imply humbling, stripping and pain, the liminality of status reversal may be compared to comedy, for both involve mockery and inversion, but not destruction of structural roles and overzealous adherents to them (1969:201)."

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