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RESOLVING THE CULTURAL DILEMMA  
OF THE AFRICAN FILM

by

Kyalo Mativo

The second leg of last summer (1983) saw the second festival of African films here at UCLA. The first such occasion took place twelve years ago (1969) when the then nascent African film made its maiden flight and executed a dramatic touchdown on 'the film capital of the world'. Represented in that first consortium were: OUMAROU GANDA's Cabascabo; OUSMANE SEMBENE's Mandabi; MOUSTAPHA ALASSANE's Le Voyage de Sim and Le Retour d'un Aventurier; HENRI DUPARC's Mouna Le Reve d'un Artiste; EDOUARD SAILLY's Le Troisième Jour; DESIR ECARE's Concerto pour un Exil and BASSORI TIMITE's La Femme au Couteau. If neither understood nor taken seriously, the African filmmaker had nevertheless stood up and spoken. In the general content of these films, we perceived what we called "cultural dilemma of the African film,"<sup>1</sup> judging from the tendency of the protagonists to muse over the complexity of their personal plight. The 'educated African', whose own preoccupations were actually the core of the theme of most of the films, found himself caught between two cultural worlds over which he had no control. In an effort of comprehension in this connection, we wrote:

"The educated African hangs here by his ankles . . . For one thing, he does not quite belong to the traditional orchard where his foregatherers once roamed. They would not understand his manners if he joined them. But he must insist on being heard even if he is crying in the wilderness. That is why he speaks French, English, or German instead of his mother tongue."<sup>2</sup>

The last two statements of this conclusion have turned out to be false on two counts: in the first place the 'educated African' does not have to, indeed must not, insist on being heard by his own people. On the contrary, he owes a good listening to the people. Secondly, the universality of film language invalidates the use of a given language as the best of all possible alternatives in matters of cultural articulation . . .

According to Prof. Teshome Gabriel, organizer of the UCLA event, the African mode of story telling is typified by an array of cultural and symbolic references. In African oral performance there appears to be a triangular overlapping relation-

ship between the text, the audience and the orator/narrator. The orator is part of the audience and the text is part of the African people's lives. Through this relationship, the audience is directly involved with the story and is able to take up the story where the orator leaves off. Based on this simple fact - it is safe to argue that while Western films have a literary and dramatic antecedent in the post-Renaissance novels and the Aristotelian drama, African films have a different form of antecedent, viz: folklore, legends and traditional spirituality. African films, in the main, stem from these cultural associations and not from the identificatory forms which grow out of the Western literary and dramatic scenario. Also, whereas in Western cinematic practice the individual here, the star, dominates the narrative form, in the African context the central character is merely one aspect in a complex web of the process of narration. The narrative discourse in African cinema is so diverse that to locate a story-telling source is only to acknowledge the presence of an omniscient orator or "voice" with cultural or historical dimensions.

The second dispatch of African films has made these two points clear beyond a shadow of doubt. Here, thirteen films representing ten countries spoke six languages: Arabic, Bambara, English, French, Moré and Wolof. Of these languages only two were foreign in respect to Africa, namely English and French. In content, most of the films addressed themselves to genuine social problems, probing into the root-causes of the political rupture now ravaging the Third World. Some of the films used the historical narrative form of story-telling for the purpose.

GASTON KABORE's Wënd Kûuni (Upper Volta) is a good illustration of this approach. A young mother, KOUDIBILA, finds herself socially rejected when she refuses to remarry following the mysterious disappearance of her husband. Believing that he still lives, she chooses to flee from animosity rather than succumb to social pressure. She dies in flight, leaving her young son stranded in the wilderness. The ordeal renders the boy literally speechless. But another family brings him up as their own, providing him with a name: Wënd Kûuni (God's Gift), and a younger sister, POGNÈRÉ. One day, Pognèrè dreams that Wënd Kûuni could speak. Actually this prophecy is subsequently fulfilled when Wënd Kûuni regains his speech in consequence of an emotional shock he sustains on discovering the body of a neighbour hanging on a tree. That's when he tells his own story.

MORÉ is the language this film uses to weave a dramatic inner structure and richness of traditional African storytelling. The simplicity of the story line, the natural flow of events, the quiet struggle between human and natural forces,

and the "story-within-the-story" thematic alignment so characteristic of African folktales -- all these elements of style tell the extent to which the African film has matured, and taken on a definite African personality. Regarding this filmic style, the filmmaker himself has this to say:

"... I decided to use folk tale. I tried to adapt it and to find a rhythm which leaves all the psychology of character to the storyteller."<sup>3</sup>

Instead of a "voice over," as would be the case in a traditional (Western) film, the storyteller here is the film itself, using the pastoral rhythm of the African countryside.

Wënd Kûuni defines the social framework within which the rest of the films take shape. It postulates the historical preamble in the folkloric onset: "Once upon a time . . ." To contrast and compare the past with the present, two films pick-up the story of the African youth in present-day Africa. Citizen NGANGURA MWEZE's Kin-Kiesse (Zaire) and ROGER M'BALA's Ablakon (Ivory Coast) examine the quality of life in the capital cities of the two countries and draw pertinent conclusions.

Kin-Kiesse is a 26 minute documentary with only one humble intention: to portray daily life in Kinshasa (the capital city of Zaire). At the sound of it, the subject is not quite endearing, especially to those of us who have developed a diminishing taste for exotic panache. Well, Kin-Kiesse is a pleasant surprise. There are interesting things to say about Kinshasa. Through the eyes of a local artist, we stroll along the streets of the city, observing and commenting on the activities of its inhabitants. Our guide tells us that there are three classes of the city dwellers. The first class is made up of the white community and a few lucky blacks. This class, says the guide, leads a comfortable life and enjoys all the best facilities available for the purpose. They play golf, go swimming, bask under the tropical sun and drink Coca-Cola. And for cultural identification, they observe their home-country festivals, such as "Oktoberfest," bien sûr -- "comme en Suisse."

The second class comprises the African bourgeoisie proper, a small group of business and political managers of foreign-owned enterprises. The members of this class live well too, by local standards, lacking only the superlative wealth requisite for membership in the first class. These spend their time aping the first class and trying to make it upwards.

Then there is the bottom class, consisting of hustlers, hookers, streetwalkers, shoe-shine boys, food-vendors, beggars and street-herbalists. Naturally, this class makes up the bulk of the city dwellers. In point of fact, 'Kin', as the

city is fondly referred to, owes its glamorous spectacle to this grey area of humanity. And that is not an exaggeration. Consider the services they provide for tourism: dancing, singing, 'one-night-stands', etc. Hence, the sentimental declaration of mood: "J'♥Kin."

What gives *Kin-Kiese* a mark of distinction is the subtlety and humour with which the story unfolds. There are the usual tom-toms and the belly-dancing expected of an "authentic" African film. But these elements form a running commentary, not of the film we are seeing, but of the social context within which such activities are performed. The effect is one of pondering about the relations between the film content and the social milieu giving rise to the special circumstances of 'Kin'. How are these circumstances created? Well, our guide says that the bottom class is composed of the negative elements of the society by virtue of bad up-bringing. And what of the upper classes? To what do they owe their social status? Silence. Point registered. And so the story goes on, like the life of the people it is depicting.

It should be pointed out that this interpretation does not construe conscious intention on the filmmaker's part. Asked whether there was anything he would have included if he had made the film under conditions different from those obtaining in Zaire, he replied with an automatic "No." He insisted further that his film was not a political statement, but an honest portraiture of life in Kinshasa. As proof of the non-political content of his film, he described a scene he had left out, which showed inscriptions on a wall along a street, with the information: "Once upon a time, there was Mobutu." But he admitted, "C'est vraiment dommage."

*Ablakon* was the second film dealing with city-life in 'modern' Africa. This time Abidjan, the capital city of Ivory Coast, is the scene of action. This unfinished story enacts the activities of wasted youth in what in the West is depicted as a model of "development" in Africa.

Six boys between the ages of 12 and 15 organise themselves into a contingent of hustlers. The purpose of their activity is simple: to earn a living. The state regards this as a nuisance and proceeds to take countermeasures. Then follows a series of 'seek-and-hide' between the police and the youngsters. In the course of the game one of the boys steals the clothes of a government official while the latter is in bed with his mistress. Nonplused, the official decides to drive home in his Mercedes all the same, dressed only in his underwear. On the way, the police stops him and demands that he identify himself, failing which he is arrested. But at the police-headquarters the arresting policeman and his superior do not agree on the

wisdom of the action. The matter is settled by decree. The Government official is officially escorted home, there to face an uncomprehending wife. The police escort intervenes: "Your husband was the victim of an aggression," he announces; which earns him a promise for promotion.

It is a familiar story in practically all those countries following a similar path of "development." Below those skyscrapers, hotels, conference rooms and other "solid indicators" of "development" lie equally solid poverty for the majority of the people, and absolute corruption among the political leaders. There is something socially inglorious about a social system which finds it entertaining to watch a one-legged 12 year old boy "dance" to a "famous" foreign record, Michael Jackson's "Don't stop till you get enough." Those contortions of that mutilated body reflect the contours of the deformed shape of the system itself, the film seems to say.

The role of the Muslim religion in the African societies finds treatment in Shaihu Umar (Nigeria) and Njangaan (Senegal). Both films address the subject from a believer's viewpoint, but they differ in ideological casting.

As his name implies, ALHAJI ADAMU HALILU, the director of Shaihu Umar, is an accomplished Muslim. He has accordingly chosen to relate the success story of one of the defenders of the "Islamic theology and sciences." A man of humble birth rises "to the position of a SHAIHU, 'the learned one', and the rank of Chief Imam."

Following unfortunate circumstances arising from the death of his father, UMAR is separated from his mother to undergo trials and ordeals culminating in slavery. He ends up in the Arab world where, his Arab master, ABULKARIM adopts him as his own son. Brought up under the tutelage of the Koran, Umar eventually achieves the position of Chief Imam.

But one day, a dream about his mother wandering alone in the desert brings a strong yearning to return to his homeland. The trip home actually brings him into contact with his mother, now old and enslaved. She dies in his arms, at the impact of the encounter. But he continues his journey, surmounting one obstacle after another, until he arrives at NAFATA, a village in Northern Nigeria. "There he decided to settle down in the relaxed and rewarding life of preaching the Koran, Islamic knowledge and sciences." That is where we find him telling the story of his life.

Adapted from a novel by Sir ABUBAKAR TAFAWA BALEWA, the first prime minister of Nigeria, himself a devout Muslim, this film assigns Islam the role of a social benefactor, bringing



fame and goodwill to its devotees. Its active participation in slavery is shown as an historical incident, not an article of faith. The point of emphasis is on the "civilising" mission of the religion as it affected one member of its believers.

As an honest expression of a religious world view, the film is an accomplished feat. But, the social criteria by which this reviewer prefers to look at films, notwithstanding, this film is of particular interest essentially to a classical Muslim community, rather than to the general audience. From this viewpoint, the filmmaker couldn't have done a better service to the world of Islam.

Like Alhaji Adamu Halilu, MAHAMA TRAORE, the director of Njangaan is, by his own confession, "a believer and practitioner" of the Islamic religion. But that is the full extent of their similarity. Where one glorifies, there the other condemns the way the religion has been socially used. When the one defends, the other attacks the hierarchal despotism of the religion; if the one solicits admiration for, the other denounces the brutality of its leaders, and so on and so forth.

Njangaan is the name and story of a young boy who is sent to obtain religious education from a MARABOUT, (local religious leader). The boy finds the slave character of this "education" unbearable; so he escapes and returns home. But his father doesn't suffer juvenile rebellion, so he drags Njangaan back to school, apologises to the Marabout for the misdemeanor and spansks the boy thoroughly in front of the school master. The Marabout doesn't need the lesson though, since beating his captive slaves makes up much of the "education."

Faced with an increasing difficulty to feed his students, the Marabout sends his eldest son together with three of his apprentices to the city. Njangaan is among the three chosen ones. In the city, the boys are thrown out into the street to beg and hustle for a few coins. At the end of the day, they bring their earnings to the Marabout's son, who counts the money, admonishes the boys for their laziness and urges them to try harder.

It is during one of these hustling expeditions that Njangaan is hit and killed by a Mercedes.

Learning of the boy's death, the Marabout journeys to report the news to the father. He earns himself a present for his pains. The Marabout takes his gift and leaves, as the boy's mother falls to the ground and grieves.

Asked to explain how he, as a strong believer in Islam, could be so unsparingly critical of his own faith, Mr. Traore

said that it was not the Islamic religion he was criticising, but the Marabout class which uses the religion as a framework of exploitation. This point is well taken, but it amounts to exculpating the foundation on which the very wrongs the film is decrying are built. Given certain social conditions, certain consequences are bound to follow. In this vein, it can be argued that the issue is not one of the Islamic religion fostering exploitative practices of the Marabout, but the social system which allows free reign of religious "education of this type. A better approach, in the opinion of this reviewer, is to examine and analyse the functions of that social system itself in order to relate it more meaningfully to the particular cases of social abuse as exemplified by the Marabout. But then, M. Traore's film makes an important contribution in that general direction, inasmuch as it reveals the exploitation and tyranny of those who hold positions of absolute power over the broad majority of the African people.

In a manner reminiscent of HENRI DUPARC's Mouna, Le Rêve d'un Artiste, Lomani Tshibamba, Ecrivain and La Gloire dans la Rue, both by Citizen NKIERI NGUNIA-WAWA (Zaire) look at the personal turbulences of an artist in a given social context. In Mouna, le Rêve d'un Artiste, the artist, a sculptor, undergoes a period of imbalance following the loss of a close friend, and on discovering the exploitative inclinations of his merchant friend. Finding himself widowed and alone, the artist invades the unknown territory of the living dead, represented by his own art work.

This theme finds reprise in La Gloire dans la Rue. The issue here is the cleavage between the individualism of the modern "man" and the general cohesion of communal life. A man leading a relatively comfortable bourgeois life turns to writing for self-comprehension. In a series of self-interrogations, consisting of long solitary walks in the city, he discovers the existence of workers, those who have to scrape a living from the streets. "Life must be very difficult for them," he realises on reflection. His wife leaves him, complaining of boredom. This forces him to join the underworld of racketeering; hence "La Gloire dans la Rue."

Lomani Tshibamba, Ecrivain addresses the same subject. It is a documentary on the life and works of a Congolese writer who recounts the problems he had to face under the Belgian colonial rule. He tells of his arrest by the Belgian colonial authorities because he insisted on writing about the African concept of reality. Opposed to individualism and material craving, this concept reposes on the communal philosophy of the African societies.

To the question why this apparent obsession with writers,



Citizen Nkieri responded that he wanted to pay homage to a certain generation of Congolese writers. But it was also clear that some of the problems facing that country today were put on focus. For example, Lomani Tshibamba, the writer under portrayal in the film, says that the social problems of the "modern" society are explicable precisely in terms of individualism. In essence, this statement begs the question, but it is to his credit that the filmmaker raised the question at all.

If the social content of the films shown at the festival was universal, the form was not. A film is designated "African" not because it is made in Africa, or because the filmmaker happens to be African, but because it employs African cultural values to express an African social reality. What comprises "African cultural values" and "African social reality" is a subject apart and can not be covered within the confines of this short review. But Arzak ya Donia (Back Street Jungle) by MOHAMED NADER GALAL (Egypt) serves to illustrate this point.

The film recounts the story of a group of villagers who migrate to the city to earn a living. There they find that the only jobs available to them are tainted with cunning, violence and death. To achieve something, and be somebody, you have to prevent somebody else from doing the same. So death comes to most of them, leaving only the "fittest" and the most ruthless to survive.

The merits of this film include the 2nd prize in the 1982 Cannes Film Festival and an Award of the Best Director by the Society of Film Writers and Critics in 1983. And in matters of technique the film does manifest marvels of competence, measured by Hollywood yardsticks. The handling of the violent scenes, for example, the wrathful courage of the underdog, especially as demonstrated by ABOU ZEID, the one-legged protagonist, and the dare-devilish survival of the fittest framework within which these scenes are executed, this recipe of film-style has a secure place in Hollywood, à la Rumble Fish by Francis Coppola.

From a non-western perspective though, these are precisely the very 'qualities' which disqualify this film as "African" in the social concept of the term. A valid social problem, namely, unemployment and lack of opportunities in the state of Egypt, is turned into a Hollywood saga, borrowing heavily not only the style, but also the profundity of Hollywood banality. Mr. Galal might do himself some good to get hold of a copy of Prof. Teshome Gabriel's book, Third Cinema in the Third World. There he might discover for himself the duties and obligations the Third World has assigned to its filmmakers.

The phenomenon of the emerging African working class and

the problem of the African youth in the urban areas are the topics of Baara and Finye, both by SOULEYMANE Cissé (Mali).

In Baara (Work), a young engineer, recently returned from training abroad, befriends a peasant boy who is having difficulties in finding acceptance among his lumpen colleagues. The engineer finds his new friend a job in the firm he is running and involves him in union activities. The engineer's keen interest in the workers' union and his support for their demands earn him a solid popularity among the workers. Perceiving threat from the workers' union, however, the management of the firm kills the young engineer, thereby provoking a general revolt, precisely the very eventuality they wanted to avoid.

What is new in this film, in the concept of African filmmaking, is the depiction of an educated man identifying with and advancing the interests of the workers. He refuses to be addressed as "Boss": "My name is Traore," he protests at one point -- when the subject comes up, but his "progressive" behaviour at work is dramatically negated by his oppression of his wife at home. He prohibits her to work, insisting that she stay at home and attend to his domestic needs, while he goes out to visit bars whenever he feels like it.

Asked to explain this dichotomy, M. Cissé said that he did not want to paint an ideal picture of the engineer. As a human being, he has his foibles, which mark a definite stage of personal underdevelopment, the filmmaker pointed out. This is a valid point to ponder. The ideal "progressive" personality, constantly under surveillance by Western liberal romantics fails to answer to his name. Still the question remains to be posed concerning the appropriate conditions under which an African progressive personality can grow. How are such conditions to be created in Africa? The film succeeds in laying the basis for the search of the answer to these questions.

In his second film, Finye (The Wind), Cissé examines the problems confronting youth in an urban atmosphere. A rebellious generation of students comes up against the reality of an established order. A military Government takes up arms to protect its gains against "juvenile" disorder. But a love-relationship between two students: the grandson of a traditional chief and the daughter of a military governor complicates the issue.

When the examination results are announced, the boy is among the failures. But then it is disclosed that some falsification was involved in the process, which unleashes a student revolt against the authorities. The military governor orders sweeping arrests of the offenders, among them the boy and the

girl, his own daughter.

After keeping the students behind bars for some time, the military governor offers to release them on condition that they sign a declaration effectively denouncing any further revolts. The traditional chieftain's grandson refuses to sign the declaration, and so does his girlfriend. The two intransigents are locked up again. Meanwhile the boy's grandfather, on learning of the arrests, seeks audience with the oracle about the matter. There, the ancestral spirit tells him that the dead have lost power over the events of the present. The actual solution of the problems of today, says the spirit, must come from the living.

Armed with this revelation, the old man seizes a gun and invades the military governor on his farmland. The two authorities face one another, "Beard to beard," and issue orders to each other, the one demanding that his grandson be released, while the other threatens to shoot the invader. Indeed this brief encounter culminates in the military governor actually shooting at the old man. But to what avail? The old man is impervious to modern guns! The military governor registers the shock of his life, so much so, that he orders the release of all the students.

The juxtaposition here is one of traditional authority set against the social injustices of the "modern" power structure in Africa. Certain positive aspects of traditional authority are indestructible, and can be put to constructive use where all else fails. The confrontation between the military governor and the traditional chief is in effect a symbolic show of force between the two systems represented by the two men. And the effective impotence of the one vis-à-vis the other, as dramatised by the shooting incident, puts the military authority on guard as to the serious consequences of meddling with traditional authority. But traditional authority has its limitations, as the ancestral voice pointed out at the oracle. In the final analysis, therefore, the real power base lies within the organisation of the masses of the people. This is what the old man tells the youngsters when they come thronging around him seeking guidance.

What M. Cissé has managed to show in this film is that the character of student revolt in the African context takes authority from the African tradition itself. This implies a connection between the Ivory Tower and the community as a whole, presupposing cultural permutation. A traditional chief, for example, has all the naiveté necessary to invade a modern military power, but in the act, he accomplishes his aim by asserting his will on his adversary. Herein lies the difference between the general emptiness of Western intellectualism and

the African application of the concept. In the absence of traditional power base, Western intellectualism fusses and fusses over technicalities and modalities of approach to this or that aspect of an issue. By contrast, the long established African tradition of intolerance to injustice of any form, dispenses with these fetters and attacks the problem from the bottom. The traditional chief does just that and achieves his goal.

There is but one serious weakness in Finye, and that is the use of drugs. For whatever reason students take drugs, there is a montage of association to the agitation itself, and this is likely to be gravely misconstrued in the West where drug-taking has been elevated to the level of popular culture. To rise up and take action against oppression, the African youth does not need drugs. On the contrary, to give that action social meaning and preserve the integrity of struggle, physical and mental agility are indispensable. And since drugs have the effect of numbing the senses and thereby negating discipline, they cannot be a positive element in conditions of social struggle. But then M. Cissé may argue that if drug-taking exists among the African youth, it should be exposed as a matter of fact. Granted, but it is the responsibility of an African filmmaker to define and construct opportune conditions under which the best qualities of the African youth can be fostered. Drug-taking is certainly not an example of one such condition. M. Cissé himself seems to be aware of this fact, judging by his apparent willingness to pursue the point during a discussion session.

By an adversity of circumstances, the films from the African diaspora and one from the continent, chose to deal with topics of less importance than those examined above. Village to Best Village by BRUCE PADDINGTON (Trinidad and Tobago), La Jeunesse Nigérienne au Festival d'Agadez by BOUBAKAR H. SOUNA (Niger) are documentaries about dance and sports festivals respectively. Vanishing Heritage by RONALD CARRINGTON (Barbados) talks about environmental pollution. These works are useful from an informative viewpoint, but they are limited by the descriptive approach to the subject matter, which deprives them depth. But the sincerity and seriousness of the effort cannot be doubted.

In his book Third Cinema in the Third World: The Aesthetics of Liberation,\* Dr. Teshome H. Gabriel lists three stages which the Third World cinema has to describe before achieving independent identity:

\*For detailed analysis of this work see reviews by Mativo in Ufahamu vol. 12 no. 2 and Présence Africaine no. 125.

- i) The assimilation stage, or the reproduction of foreign cultural values,
- ii) Return to the source phase, drawing inspiration from the cultural values of the indigenous people,
- iii) The combative stage, the period of self determination.

In the first festival of African films, practically all the films could be shown to belong to the first stage. The question now arises: In what relation do the films in this second festival stand to this scheme? One cannot afford rigidity in matters of opinion, but a rough pattern of distribution of these films corresponding to the three stages can be attempted with a measure of exactitude.

The absolute monarch of the first category of mechanical reproduction of foreign cultural values is Arzak ya Donia. The concept and execution of this film, as pointed out earlier, are faithfully Hollywoodian. That is our personal view. Refutations and objections are welcome. Shaihu Umar straddles between the first and the second stages. Its theoretical concept is non-African, but the realisation of this concept is indigenous.

In various degrees of emphasis, the second category, "Return to the source" accommodates more films. Njangaan, Ablakon, Wênd Kûuni, Kin-Kiesse, La Gloire dans la Rue and Lomani Tshibamba, Ecrivain all belong here.

Lying largely in the "gray area" between the second and third stage are Baara and Finye. Additionally, the cultural and political militancy of these films wins them a discernible area of operation within the combative arena where African social values take an active stand against Western concepts, and emerge victorious.

The second festival of African films at UCLA was just one of the many such events taking place in Africa itself. Such events provide good opportunities for the African filmmaker to take stock of his progress and garner up his energy for further development in the effort. GASTON KABORE, the director of Wênd Kûuni, sums up the need for more activity in this direction. In relation to his own film he says:

"I wanted to shock people through an artifice of language. I don't mean to say that before (colonialism) everything was nirvana. According to my perception of things, the precolonial period is too idealised . . ."



Which is not to deny the general truth of the folktale:

"At that time, the white man had not yet trodden on MOSSI soil . . . the granaries were overflowing with grain . . . peace and prosperity were everywhere . . .";<sup>4</sup>

or to doubt the wisdom of the Kwinkwiniga bird, as recorded in the theme song of the film:

"The shade of the Kwinkwiniga tree attracts birds;  
On a dried-out-Kwinkwinga a bird will never rest."<sup>5</sup>

But to the question, "What is the African film?" the answer is still fomenting. As GILBERT MINOT points out, it is only "after you've produced a certain number of films a certain personality, a certain image of that specific cinema starts to take shape."<sup>5</sup> That specificity can be considered to be evident only in relation to the fulfilment of the main goals of the African cinema. These goals form a summary of this review:

"The role of the cinema in Africa should first be to educate the people, through documentaries, of our culture, our customs, and so on, and through educational films, but we should not stop there. It is also very important to feature films in order to re-establish a certain image, a positive image of Africa on the screen."<sup>6</sup>

To a certain degree, the films featured in the festival have made a positive contribution to this effect, nevertheless, like *Oliver Twist*, the African identity demands more.

#### NOTES

1. K. Mativo, "Cultural Dilemma of the African Film," Ufahamu, vol. 1, no. 3, p. 64.
2. Ibid. p. 67.
3. Gaston Kabore: interview in JEUNE CINEMA no. 149 (March 1983), translated from the French by CLAIRE AGUILAR and K. Mativo, reprinted in the programme for the film festival, p. 5.
4. Ibid. p. 6.
5. GILBERT MINOT, "Toward the African cinema," Ufahamu, vol. 12, no. 2, p. 40.
6. Ibid.