TOYIN FALOLA

THE MAN, THE MASK, THE MUSE

EDITED BY
NIYI AFOLABI

CAROLINA ACADEMIC PRESS
Durham, North Carolina
Dedicated to my mother: Ogboja
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PROLOGUE
NIYI AFOLABI

It must be asserted from the outset that this book is not a *festschrift* but a biographical-critical assessment of the cumulative scholarship and other intellectual engagements of Prof. Toyin Falola, a historian, poet, critic, teacher and community leader. *Toyin Falola: The Man, the Mask, the Muse* engages the life, works, and thoughts of a renowned historian and scholar of Africa and the African diaspora. In its five-part design, it assembles a formidable group of eminent and emergent scholars who pay a balanced critical homage to the accomplishments of their endeared colleague and public intellectual. The first segment echoes distinguished invocations, which sum up the enigma that Toyin Falola represents as a “poet,” “volcanic force,” “diasporic muse,” “master teacher,” and a “Neo-Renaissance man,” among other accolades. The second serves as scholarly configurations of what the contributors define as “Falolaism.” The third interrogates the contributions of Falola to Yoruba historiography and the African diaspora studies. The fourth is a more focused study of Falola’s perspectives on African historiography and development, while the final section theorizes on Falola’s creative energies. In sum, the book represents a celebration of the Africanization of knowledge, the miracle of success, and the sacrifices it entails.

The book’s conceptual miracle occurred while I was seating at the new faculty orientation at the University of Texas at Austin in the summer of 2008 and somehow traveled subconsciously down memory lane. It was a momentary flash from the inner spirit that had to be rescued from unintended oblivion. Listening to and marveling at how administrators and faculty members shared a sense of community, competitive edge, and pride in their institution, I had to reach deep down to explain the different circumstances that have propelled my path toward the gates of this university. It was less of the tropical landscape or the gallery of distinguished scholars and professors that I found alluring, but the fact of being transported across many continents as I have come to see my own professional journey in the process of becoming.

Why did I come to the University of Texas at Austin? The answer is better left to the multiplicity of divine providence. The ups and downs through the valleys of life are instructive reminders that we are all part of a cosmic miracle where those who mean us harm end up actually opening new possibilities for our renewal. I pondered how the story could have ended after many “stones in the way” of fulfillment placed by those who have arrogated to themselves the power of privilege and perception but lack the humanity to respect others whom they consider “different,” despite their puzzling iden-
tity that is nothing short of being the creation and miracle of God. I was overwhelmed at the realization that I was having a fresh start, whatever that means, that I had gone through so many challenges and obstacles that are too numerous to mention; in the strange commission of divine providence, I had entered a new gate of discovery beyond my own imagination. Chance, they say, is a conduit for great things. As much as one can never fully decipher the mysteries of nature and life, the combination of coincidences testifies that there is indeed a Higher Power. Perhaps this partly explains the manifestation of such divine intelligence as echoed by the Vice President for Diversity and Community Engagement, Prof. Gregory Vincent, who stated at the orientation that “there is nothing more competitive than higher learning.” Of course, there were many quotable quotes on those long weeks of immersion, but that phrase stuck with me.

A final memento was when as a group of new faculty members we were made to make the “long horns” sign. At that very magical-realist moment, it felt like some kind of ritualistic initiation was going on as I heard the voice: “remember that the Big Brother is watching, until Angel Gabriel sounds the horn!” Nothing could have been more mysterious but it was a signal that, even as new initiates, we had been immaculately conceived by default and were now on our way to the miracle of exponential birth into seven seasons.

In this mystery of conception and impending birth, a number of mentors have been instrumental. To all those who wrote letters of recommendation; and to those who offered words of solace, especially at such times when the crossroad moments were agonizing and tormenting, I offer my appreciation and heartfelt gratitude. For once, I will not name names, and that may be a good thing. For the magic of recommendation has its own revelation about the burden the writer carries to open the gates for someone they have come to value, admire, and trust. It is an enormous responsibility. I am deeply grateful. It is flattering and humbling indeed that testimonials were being written to ensure my continued membership in higher learning. How have I come to earn this level of reputation in the eyes of my mentors? Among this group of scholars, Prof. Falola stands out as the ultimate strategic facilitator. My gratitude has no bounds. Thus from a chance encounter at the University of Wisconsin-Madison during the conference on the “Dilemma(s) of Democracy in Nigeria” in 1995, to the memory of a public “triangular” professor whose movement was itself a structural design between his Department of History, the Ezekiah Oluwasanmi Library, and the then University of Ife Bookstore (where at least three of his books were on display to the admiration of students at a time when he was a young scholar with thick glasses), I could not predict that destiny would have us meet again on a campus away from the shores of Nigeria. As the Yoruba say, ori lo mo ibi to n gbe ese re (“only one’s destiny, or god-head, knows where it is leading one’s trajectory”). Even as his own professional tribulations and persecutions are yet to be written or documented, it occurs to me that we share a similar ordeal in that regard. The Yoruba also have a saying that omi ti a maa mu ko ni san koja eni, that is, “one’s fountain of blessings shall not be hidden from one.”

A book such as Toyin Falola: The Man, the Mask, the Muse could only have been divinely inspired. A scholarly venture of course, it has taken on a life of its own. From Africa to the Atlantic world, from the Atlantic world to Africa, I thank the contributors as well as the distinguished commentators who have chosen to honor Prof. Falola;
without them this book would not have seen the light of day. I wish to express my grati-
ITUDE to a number of individuals. First, I thank the publisher of Carolina Academic
Press, Dr. Keith Sipe for his faith in this massive volume and Tim Colton, the produc-
tion editor, for his technical expertise. Second, I thank Steve Huff and Richard Foer-
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matic Initiatives and Community Engagement, and Dr. Omi Osun Joni L. Jones, the
Director of the John L. Warfield Center for African and African American Studies of
the University of Texas at Austin, for their constant support. Fourth, I thank my col-
leagues in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese and the Warfield Center of
African and African American Studies for their camaraderie. Fifth, I appreciate Sam
Saverance’s contribution to the book design. Finally, I thank Mrs. Bisi Falola for her
usual support.

In returning this biographical-critical study to Prof. Falola, we have not conspired
to suggest that his mission is complete, but indeed, we have elected to express a token
of appreciation for his selfless and restless undertaking in the form of what may be
termed an academic labor of love. It is just a beginning of many such tributes to come.
We must also thank the University of Texas at Austin, the location of his academic pro-
duction, for recognizing this true son of Africa who continues to crisscross the contin-
ents in order to promote the university as well as its engraved mission: “What hap-
pens here changes the world.”

Let me end this homage by invoking the regenerative spirit of carnival that an
African poet, Kofi Anyidoho, captures in the following lines from his book of poetry:
A Harvest of Our Dreams:

Somehow we know the carnival days
Cannot be gone so soon
We may gather again those
Unfinished harvests of our soul.
NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

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Adérónké Adésànyà, PhD, is a painter and art historian in the Institute of African Studies at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria, and James Madison University, Virginia. Her
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Kayode Animasaun, PhD (Drama), is a gender and popular culture scholar and theorist. On reaching the peak of his career as Chief Lecturer in the Federal Polytechnic, Bida, transferred his services to Osun State University, Osogbo. Presently a lecturer of drama in the College of Humanities and Culture of the Ikire Campus of the University, Animasaun is a member of the Actors’ Guild of Nigeria (AGN), Screen Writers’ Guild of Nigeria (SWGN), and Association of Nigerian Theatre Practitioners (ANTP). He is the founder and National Coordinator of the Society of Movie Scholars (SOMS), and Gender Empowerment Network Through Literacy Exercises (GENTLE), a Non-Government Organization. He is editor-in-chief of the International Journal of Gender and Development, and editorial adviser of Journal4africa (UK). Kayode Animasaun is the author of numerous books including: Sand-eating Dog, The Will to Live, and Rat Attack (plays), The Great Challenge (a biography), Cursed Blessing (prose work), A Gift for the Corper (children’s story), and Communication for Empowerment (a general studies material). His articles on gender, development, and popular culture have been published in many national and international journals. He is a recipient of the Fellowship award of the Institute of Corporate Administration of Nigeria; and Member, Research Board of Advisors to the American Biographical Institute.

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A.B. Assensoh, PhD, is professor in the Department of African American and African Diaspora Studies at Indiana University-Bloomington, USA. His M.A. and PhD degrees in history are from New York University, while his initial postdoctoral studies were done in the Department of Peace Studies, University of Bradford, West Yorkshire, UK, where he studies Martin Luther King, Jr.’s quest for peace and racial integration in the USA. Previously, Prof. Assensoh served as director of research and associate editor of the Martin Luther King, Jr., Papers Project of Stanford University, California, from where he was seconded to the Martin Luther King, Jr. Center for Non-Violent Social Change on Auburn Avenue, Atlanta, Georgia. At the Center, he worked for Mrs. Coretta Scott King and the historic King Archives, which are now housed at Dr. King’s alma mater, Morehouse College. He has held postdoctoral fellowships on various academic campuses, including the University of Oxford (Centre for Gender Studies); Harvard University (NEH-related studies in comparative slavery); University of Virginia (NEH-related studies in general slavery); University of Texas at Austin (NEH-related studies in British Commonwealth History); Lincoln University in Pennsylvania, USA (as Scholar-in-Residence to research on Nkrumah); and Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia (as Visiting Scholar/Researcher). Ghana-born Dr. Assensoh is the author of numerous books, scholarly articles, syndicated columns and popular articles. Among his published monographs/books are: Kwame Nkrumah: Six Years in Exile, 1966-1972 (Stockwell, UK); Kwame Nkrumah of Africa (Stockwell, UK); African Political Leadership (Krieger Publishers, Florida, USA); and African Military History and Politics,
1900-Present (co-authored book, Palgrave Division of St. Martin’s Press, New York, USA). Currently Dr. Assensoh and Dr. Yvette M. Alex-Assensoh (his spouse of 15 years and of Indiana University) are co-authoring a book on Malcolm X, which is under contract with Greenwood Publishing Group, USA.

Abdul Karim Bangura is professor of research methodology and political science at Howard University. He holds a PhD in political science, a PhD in development economics, a PhD in linguistics, and a PhD in computer science. He is the author of 57 books and more than 450 scholarly articles. He also is fluent in about a dozen African and six European languages, and studying to increase his proficiency in Arabic and Hebrew.

John Ayotunde Bewaji is a Professor in the faculty of the Department of Languages, Linguistics and Philosophy at the University of West Indies (Mona Campus) in Kingston, Jamaica. A well-published scholar, his current research is on the analysis of Black cultures in the Caribbean.

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Ademola O. Dasylva, PhD, Professor, is a poet, literary theorist and critic; he co-coordinates Ibadan Cultural Studies Group, and teaches drama, poetry, the African novel, and oral literature/folklore studies at the Department of English, University of Ibadan, Nigeria. Dasylva’s scholarly publications include, *Understanding Wole Soyinka: Death and the King’s Horseman; Studies in Drama; Classificatory Paradigms in African Oral Narrative* (a monograph), and co-edited with Prof. Kola Owolabi *Forms and Functions of English and Indigenous Languages in Nigeria*; co-author of *Studies in Poetry*. His collection of poems, *Songs of Odamolugbe* won the 2006 ANA/Cadbury National Award for Poetry; recently, he won the 2009 Africanist Research Award by the University of Texas at Austin, USA. Dr. Dasylva is widely published in local and international journals.

Robert Dibie, PhD, is dean and professor at Indiana University Kokomo’s School of Public and Environmental Affairs (SPEA). Prof. Dibie is the author of several books, book chapters, and more than sixty research articles in peer-refereed journals. He has presented more than one hundred academic papers in national and international conferences, focusing on issues of sustainable development, public management, public policy, and African politics. He is currently the editor of the *Journal of International Politics and Development*. Prof. Dibie has also consulted for several NGOs and universities in the United States, Africa and the Caribbean Islands.

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