

Making Images, Re-making Life:
ART AND LIFE IN AHMED YERIMA

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THE ENDLESS METAPHOR: DIRECTORS AND THE PLAYS OF YERIMA

By
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Preamble

At the surface level, the plays of Ahmed Yerima appear very simple to direct. This is consequent upon its simplicity in language and plot development. However, from the sociological, cultural and artistic perspectives, Yerima's plays, if not properly and dexterously handled, may turn out to be directors' nightmare. This is because Yerima's plays are evidently powered and loaded with the best of Western and African aesthetics, saturated with a multiplicity of idioms and full of scathing parables. From feminism to socialism and Marxism, deconstruction to tragic canons, and from purely protest/propagandist manifesto to demythologization, the plays of Yerima remain in the deep web of a shift in paradigm, frankly and critically creative although theatrically and dramaturgically unstable. This essay therefore, examines the contextual shift in 'isms', performance styles and dramaturgical inventiveness that bury Yerima's plays in the game of an endless metaphor. Eight plays of Yerima, *The Bishop and the Soul*

(1998), *Thank you Lord* (1998), *Kaffir's Last Game* (1998), *The Trials of Oba Ovonramwen* (1998), *Attahiru* (1999), *The Sisters* (2001), *Dry Leaves on Ukan Tree* (2001) and *Yemoja* (2002) will be our focus, and the analytical methodology will be adopted for this study. Some directorial problems, in relation to Yerima's plays, will be examined and directorial prospects identified in this work with the hope of educating and informing prospective directors in the drama and theatre of Yerima on how best his plays could be "tackled". It is recommended also, that these problems must never be underrated by directors in their interpretative roles of directing the plays of Yerima.

Introduction: From Soyinka to Yerima

Of recent, the art of playwriting in Nigeria has been carnivalized and debased, wearing in the process, the toga of "anything goes" and leading, uncreatively, to intellectually impotent plays. However, the endless metaphor in the plays of Ahmed Yerima has turned him into a rare gift to the Nigerian theatre profession. Yerima's mind is the unstained workshop for endless creativity: he is unassumingly gifted with deep imagination.

Ahmed Yerima started as a trained playwright. Apart from the inspirational urge to write and produce, Yerima has also put his fertile creative fingers into the art of play directing thus making him a playwright/director. He adds the attraction of literary criticism to his works in spite of the numerous administrative and cultural assignments which he has to cope with as the substantive director of the foremost Nigerian creative factory the National Troupe and the General Manager of the National Theatre of Nigeria.

Ahmed Yerima trained at the then University of Ife (now

Obafemi Awolowo University) under the “endlessly fertile and endlessly inventive” (Osofisan, 25) African Nobel Prize Winner, Wole Soyinka. Yerima says it all:

I did a one year certificate course in Creative Arts. Professor Wole Soyinka was my lecturer and I was his only play-writing student for that year. So I had full time to learn the do's and don'ts of playwriting. I was able to sit down and write some plays. I wrote *Statements in Prison* which Professor Soyinka liked and we presented it to the nine progressive governors at that time. It was also the first play to be done for the Nigerian Universities Theatre Arts Festival... (Yerima, 2003a: 22).

Concluding, Yerima asserts that every good play must go through a process of evolution and that Soyinka had taught him in school that “when you write a play, put it aside and come back to it after a while. You must find mistakes and omissions” (Yerima, 2003a: 22).

Arguably, there is a link, at the level of dramaturgy and contextual messages, between the plays of Wole Soyinka and that of Ahmed Yerima. Most of their plays in the comico-satirical tradition wear the mask of revolution and protest in the agitational propaganda lexicon although they are mostly located, crafted and re-invented under African myths, legends, heroes and rituals. The point of departure has to do with Soyinka's radical use of language which critics (Chinweizu et al 1980, Jeyifo 1986 and 2004, and so on) have variously labelled as being “too complex”, “highly individualistic”, “obscure” and “difficult” though other contrary opinions have since been advanced as to the exaggerated gap and notion of obscurantism and complexity frequently charged at Soyinka's works. Paradoxically, Yerima makes use of simple yet

poetic, flowery yet parabolic, raw yet metaphoric language in his plays. Yerima is imaginatively economical with the use of language unlike his teacher, Soyinka, whose basket of language is always filled with beautiful and numerous linguistic colourations. In spite of the minor points of departure, it must be re-emphasized that there is a progressive link between the plays of Soyinka and Yerima. Therefore, if scholars of drama and theatre find this postulation attractive, they should see a critical study of Soyinka as germane to a thorough understanding of the plays of Yerima. The layer of multiplicity of interconnections will, to some point, be shown in this work.

Yerima, an Obviously Ignored Dramatist

Does Yerima belong to the second generation of Nigerian playwrights? Or, is he the leader of the third generation of Nigerian playwrights? This is a puzzle which Nigerian theatre historians will have to resolve. Except for *Three Plays in Transition* which Yerima published in 1980, other published plays of his appeared between 1997 till date. This late appearance of Yerima on the Nigerian literary scene, through published works, may be used by theatre historians to place Yerima in the third generation of Nigerian playwrights. This essayist is in support of this notion and this is not to diminish the status of Yerima as a renowned Nigerian playwright. To put it more succinctly, as a theatre scholar, Yerima belongs to the second generation of intellectuals but as a playwright, some of us have to be convinced of Yerima's second generation status.

This late appearance of Yerima, perhaps, is partly responsible for the paucity of literary and critical essays on his works. However, between 1997 till date, Yerima has been having a fair representation in national dailies though most of the articles on him only come as reviews of his past directorial efforts. Some of the plays directed by Yerima are from the repertory of other Nigerian playwrights while most are from his stable. Incisive articles from Hussein (2003), Ajayi (2004), Ayorinde (2004) and Balogun

04) extensively review the innovativeness of Yerima as a cultural ambassador and theatre director especially when he directed Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman* at the Muson Centre in Lagos for the celebration of Soyinka's seventieth birthday on the 6th of July, 2004. The Society of Nigeria Theatre Artists' 14 Conference hosted by the Department of Creative Arts, University of Lagos between July 1st to 3rd, 2004 with the theme, "Sustaining the Development of Theatre Practice in Nigeria", nonetheless, provided the much needed forum for discussion on the drama and theatre of Ahmed Yerima whose works were gallantly discussed along the theme of the conference. Theatre scholars make various references to his works and place him properly as a Nigerian dramatist who has contributed significantly to the maintenance and development of theatre practice in Nigeria. Elsewhere, we see Ahmed Yerima as "one of the most outstanding playwright-directors of his time" (Musa, 34) while Awodiya (50) sees Yerima as a playwright who "tear down the artificial walls of myths that are plaguing the Nigerian society" in his highly controversial article, "Breaking Down the Walls: The Drama of Ahmed Yerima".

Interestingly, there have also been critical studies from Ahmed Yerima on his own works. The first is *Basic Techniques in Playwriting* (2003), which celebrates the dynamics, principles and elements of playwriting. The second and the most important critical work from Yerima is his widely celebrated *Fragmented Thoughts and Specifics: Essays in Dramatic Literature* (2003). This book contains related articles on theatre, nationalism, ideology, maturation, culture, criticism, politics, feminism, historicism and on, all nurtured through canons in the humanities. This book also exposes the inner working system of Yerima as a playwright, director and literary critic. Yerima has edited critical works with Olu Akinwale, Bakare Ojo Rasaki and Arnold Udoka. His work on Geoffrey Axworthy also expands the frontiers of technical theatre.

Mention must also be made of undergraduate and postgraduate projects and dissertations on the works of Ahmed

Yerima. Most of these critical works are at the first-degree level while a few have appeared at the master's degree level. One of such, and that which celebrates Yerima as a director is written by Tayo Simeon Arinde with the title: "Principles and Practice of Play Directing in Nigeria: Ahmed Yerima as a Case Study" (2005), submitted to the Department of the Performing Arts, University of Ilorin, Ilorin. To date, and to our knowledge, we have not come across a Ph.D thesis fully dedicated to the works of Ahmed Yerima.

The Endless Metaphor in Yerima's Plays

It is difficult to pin down Yerima as a playwright of specific ideology and metaphor because he has practically deployed his creative arsenals in the major and important ideological undercurrents in the Nigerian theatre. His, is the case of a scholar in the fruitful search for the intellectualization of life. This life intellectualization is a poser that Yerima himself raises in most of his plays. Speaking as Bishop in *The Bishop and the Soul*, Yerima reflects thus: "I don't write for an Utopian world, but for their world, for ours too" (p.19). Between their world and our world, Yerima has consciously demystified and deconstructed existing theatrical norms and performance theories.

First and most important is Yerima's celebration of tragic canons. The Greek classicism has been reworked into African tragedy by Yerima through the basic canons of the African concept of tragedy which includes: tragic effect of emotional identification; tragic action; the hybridity and harmonious reflection of Aristotelian and Nietzschean sensibilities; the interrelation of the tragic sense in the comic sense; ritual celebration; irreducible hermenticism; affectionous use of music, dance and sound (Iji, 28-29). *The Trials of Oba Ovonoramwen*, *Otaelo* and *Dry Leaves on Ukan Trees* are three plays that Yerima wrote, just like Soyinka, Clark, Rotimi, Sofola and others before him, to promote the dramatization of heroism and anti-heroism, ritual permutations, catharsis,

tradition and the need to defend it, change and its permanence in human affairs and the constant cosmic intervention in the affairs of this world. *The Trials of Oba Ovonramwen* is a radical response to Rotimian dramaturgy in *Ovonramwen N'ogbaisi* where Ovonramwen in his traditional glamour and splendor tells his story by himself and by extension, a re-write of the controversial invasion by the British imperial power. Ovonramwen has this to say:

Here I am seated in my glory. The once most feared, most respected. Oba Ovonramwen, son of Adolo. Here in subdued glory with whiteman's feathers fluttering like a peacock unsure of what weather of the day to spread its wonderful, colourful wings. Here I am posing for whiteman's jeers. How can I discredit myself when the truth is that the story will never be written well if I don't tell you myself (p.19).

Beyond the Benin Council's poetic somersault and Yerima's radical demystification of Rotimi's script, this metatext (*The Trials...*) captures the African concept of tragedy by celebrating its main concept of (irreducible hermenticism) for Ovonramwen's fall signals the entire fall of the community. *Dry Leaves*, on the other hand, also benefitted greatly from Soyinka's tragic play, *Death and the King's Horseman*. The correlation of African myth re-echoes again in *Dry Leaves*. Elesin Oba is in the regalia of Ulolo although there are remarkable points of departure at the levels of heroism and anti-heroism. Idahota is also the voiceless woman who gives so much life to Elesin Oba to complete the cycle of life in a play where many attempts are made to interpret life. And as Elesin Oba speaks eloquently about his "vital flow, the last from this flesh" which "is intermingled with the

promise of future life” (Soyinka, 40), Ulolo also plays on tragic words in *Dry Leaves* to capture life and the inevitability of death:

I speak of fear I speak of departing the
earth too soon. I speak of my new wife,
whose hidden pleasures I am yet to
explore, I speak of life, whose active
beds I am yet to taste Yes, I speak of
death, too close When I am not ready..
(p.13)

Yerima's *Kaffir's Last Game* creatively falls within the protest/propagandist/absurdist manifesto. This play is a parody on bad leadership and a subtle comparism of two giant African nations: Nigeria and South Africa. Professor, a character in the play represents the depth of delusions, illusions, disillusion, waste and destruction that have characterized the Nigerian nation while Mbulelo represents the historical evolution of the South African nation where there is a ray of hope. Interestingly, the theme of imperialism resurfaces in the play. For example, the over-bearing nature of the Americans becomes a subject of discourse in the play:

Mbulelo: The Americans are not a people. They have lost that status and description. They are just Americans. If you think of them just as Americans, then their action will never hurt you. Look at Libya. Even now they want to tell President Mandela who to shake or visit. I tell you they are not a people.

Professor: They also did that to us. And our government cannot stomach their political machinations and intrigues also... (p.17).

Neo-colonialism or recolonization of the black leaders and elites is also unsparingly represented in the play. “Wasted words” or no wasted words (apologies to Yerima) in his radical response to

Ola Rotimi's lamentation through his "Coups mentality", the Soyinka phenomenon resurfaces again in *Kaffir's Last Game*. The song of "I love dis Lagos" which appears on page seventeen of Soyinka's *The Beatification of Area Boy* is smartly reworked on page twenty-five of *Kaffir's Last Game*. Same can be said of Professor's speech on page thirty-three; "After committing all atrocities from Monday to Thursday, we spend Friday to Sunday Praying" which, in Soyinka's *Opera Wonyosi*, is the paraphrase of a song. However, as Yerima's Professor acquires a "sense of cynicism" in the play, we, his admirers should not. Rather, we should be encouraged to be more versatile as students of politics, critics of politics and participants in the political process. One day, we will get our political bearing right.

Closely related to *Kaffir's Last Game* is Yerima's feminist animation through *The Sisters*. Nana, Taiwo, Funmi and Toun have shown in the play that power, especially political power is temporal. The play also exposes the vanity and deceit, treachery and betrayal, infidelity and intrigues that often characterize African matrimonial homes. Beyond the diplomatic niceties of feminism which the play exhudes lies, also, the political undertones of African leaders' sit-tight syndrome. The crossfire between Funmi and Taiwo below will help to reinforce this assertion:

Funmi: You see we were planning the programme for the next elections, and had the future ahead of him. I felt it was fatigue.

Taiwo: What future? The man had ruled this country for twenty years. Four terms, four rotten terms, and he was still looking ahead to the future? What future? Whose future? I always wonder why you people never learn. The people were praying for you to leave, and you had the grand illusion that we loved you and wanted you to stay for another term? Did

you have no eyes? Were you so much in love with power that you became blind?... (p.19).

It was too much obsession for power that killed Dipo the sit-tight president in the play. The Sisters' poetic outburst only help to confirm their deep-seated hatred and dislike for the president's frailties when it comes to political power.

Yerima's *Yemoja* may be said to be a performance script of demythologization, feminist ascendancy, poetic deconstruction filled with satiric jabs. Yerima rapes the Yoruba myth of Ogun, Esu and Yemoja with impunity in the play. He gives another dimension and interpretation to the love tangle between Esu, Ogun and Yemoja. In Yoruba cosmology, Yemoja personifies love, beauty, grace, ritual, splendor and civility. The myth of Yemoja, as creatively written by Yerima in *Yemoja*, is a sacred story which was cleverly re-written to show the triumph of womanism and feminism against male chauvinism. Esu, the Yoruba god of comedy, attempts to destabilize a very successful marriage between Ogun and Yemoja in an act of vengeance. The play reveals trust and betrayal, innocence and stupidity. The trap that Esu sets for Yemoja relatively leads to her transformation as the adorable river goddess. In a kind of transitional theatre, the play places the gods "in one spatial and temporal existential plane" with the rest of us. The myth of Yemoja, demythologized in Yerima's *Yemoja*, is, therefore, a new vista, different from the commonly held notions about the vulnerability of Ogun, Esu and Yemoja.

Factionalism, a fruitful combination of the facts of history and the fiction of the playwright's creative imagination, is used by Yerima to recount the heroic deeds of Sultan Attahiru, the 12th Sultan of Sokoto, whose gallantry and resistance give meaning to the spirit of nationalism in *Attahiru*. Expatriating on the concept of factionalism, Yerima states that:

Drama is a product of fiction. Drama is fiction. And even when the materials

used are historical past, and facts, for it to become part of drama, it must be infused and inspired by fiction the creative flow of the mind's imagination (Yerima, 2003b:191).

Factionalism is an aesthetic theory that queries the role of the artist in society. Or, are all works of arts not premised on the facts of history? Even if playwrights are drenched in abstractionism, do they not all, to some point, draw from shared historical experiences to propound such abstractions? Or, can a playwright write out of vacuum? The vacuum of writing lies the deep facts of historicity and historical reconstruction.

Attahiru, a religio-historical and political play, reveals the economic exploitation, imperialist and expansionist tendencies of the British Government who are desirous to outdo the French and German Governments in their ambition. The courage and gallantry of Attahiru must be mentioned in the play. Attahiru says:

...let them remember us all here as heroes not as the whiteman's slaves. Let them remember that when it was time to say no in the name of Allah, one humble Muslim led a group of believers to say no to colonial oppression even at the cost of our lives! We shall never surrender! (p.61).

Yerima hits hard at fake religious propagandists in *The Bishop and the Soul* while *Thank you Lord* can be seen as man's persistent search to know God. Also, *The Bishop and the Soul* examines the ambition, the conspiracy and the deception within the house of God. It also records the social problems of the nation after all as Bishop says in the play, "it is difficult to draw a line between politics and religion".

Much as Yerima celebrates endless metaphors in his plays, his fanatical reliance on the reception theory which "is built on the

argument that a play which is written with historical materials of a particular people must belong to somebody” (Yerima, 2003b:202) or the community, must be noted. To defend *Attahiru*, *The Trials of Ovonramwen* and other historical plays of his, will, therefore, to some point, be a contradiction of his dialectical constructs in factionalism. Reception theory will lead to praise-singing and psychophancy, where accuracy to the facts of history (if it is negative to the owner of the history) may not have a place. If the theatre must praise, let it praise without losing the passion for objectivity and if a theatre must be subjective, it must not be historically subjective.

Directorial Problems in the Plays of Yerima

Directing is the aesthetic animation of a lifeless script into living and speaking things. It is an

art of the theatre, which involves the organization, management, interpretation, co-ordination, presentation, and the manipulation of human and material resources towards the sole purpose of creating a cohesive artistic experience for the audience (Musa, 94).

Considering its overtly dynamic mechanics and elastic aesthetics therefore, play directing has been unequivocally accepted by scholars such as Nelms (1950), Dean and Carra (1965), Brooks (1968), Schechner (1969), Hodge (1971), Rotimi (1971), Soyinka (1977, 1984 and 1993), Adelugba (1973 and 2003), Morrison (1984), Oduneye (1990), Barranger (1995), Johnson (2001 and 2003), Bell-gam (2003) and Ukala (2005) among several others, as an important art of the theatre. This is why Brooks (18) insists that the “director must deliver the goods or be fired” and concludes that “the director does not ask to be God and yet his role implies it” (38).

The following are, therefore, some directorial problems that artistic directors are likely to face as they interpret or decipher Yerima's plays for stage interpretations:

The duality (or more) of interpretations in Yerima's plays should take warning, for every play of Yerima has a multiplicity of idioms and may be capable of numerous directorial/aesthetic interpretations. In as much as the director is not obliged to interpret to suite the purpose of a playwright, a playwright's poetic justice should not be sacrificed on the altar of mediocrity or the director's self-indulgence. Yerima, in most of his plays, is a master of double-speak.

Fake start; it is to be noted that most of the plays of Yerima have a seemingly simplistic beginning. This portends danger for an unsuspecting director, for surface realistic interpretation has been noted to be the undoing of most directors of Yerima's plays. Of the eight plays analyzed in this essay, many of them start with captivating words and stage instructions that may end up to be the undoing of an unsuspecting director. *Yemoja*, *The Trials of Obi*, *Ovonramwen*, *The Bishop and the Soul*, *Kaffir's Last Game* and *Dry Leaves on Ukan Trees* start on this kind of note.

Transitional Theatre; although Yerima spoke about "The Dwindling Influence of Brecht on Contemporary Nigerian Theatre and Playwrights", his plays are dramaturgically Brechtian even if he will not acknowledge the episodic nature of his plays. To handle a Brechtian play deserves a special understanding of the pervading environment surrounding such a play. The problems of directing epic theatricals are most likely going to find themselves in the plays of Yerima.

Total theatre contraptions; Total theatre idiom is eminently pro-African. However, most of the plays of Yerima fall within the total

theatre idioms of dance (dance-drama or dance-theatre), music, mime, incantation, chant, praise-poetry and so on. The inter-relationship of these art forms cannot be over-emphasized. Importantly, the total theatre play can be a director's nightmare if not well handled.

Theatre of literature; Contemporary theatre trends favour theatre of performance rather than theatre of literature. This is because theatre of literature is dialogue-based and relies heavily on technical elements in its realization. The theatre of performance has been well theorized by Richard Kostelanetz in his article; "A Theatre of Performance not Literature". Yerima's *The Sisters*, *Kaffir's Last Game*, *Otaelo* to mention a few, are theatre of literature, not of performance. Yerima's statement in the above plays is very clear: "I am in control of language here". But theatricality and its resources are unavoidably absent in such dialogic effusions.

Multicultural aesthetics; As one of Nigeria's foremost cultural ambassadors, Yerima has consciously created what can be described as a Nigerian Federal Theatre. Yerima has written plays about the major events and larger-than-life heroes of the Nigerian multi ethnic divides. Yerima's scripts are, therefore, veritable weapons for Nigeria's cultural engineering and rebirth. Multicultural theatre has its own aesthetic trappings which may be difficult to dissect by an uncritical director. For instance, Yerima re-writes the Yoruba myth in *Yemoja*, exposes the evils of Osu Caste System in Igboland through *Otaelo* and at the same time celebrates Attahiru and Ameh Oboni's heroic deeds through *Attahiru* and *Ameh Oboni The Great*. He also carries to the crossroad, the rituals and traditions of the people of Ishan through his *Dry Leaves on Ukan Trees*. Yerima has personified the Nigerian culture and directors should note that this cross-cultural fertilization of ideas may pose a problem at the level of directorial interpretation.

The 'untragic' muse in Yerima's tragedies; Although Yerima has

conformed to tragic canons as earlier mentioned, most of his tragedies are too close to satire and may not totally fall into the class of well-written tragedies if the totality of tragic elements are considered. Directors will have to be careful not to turn these tragedies into satires.

Prospects of Directing Yerima's Plays

Simplicity of language without losing the finesse of metaphors and idioms; Yerima makes use of simple and communicative language in his plays. This has made most of his plays accessible to readers and directors/producers.

Deep theatrical resources and potentials; The technical possibilities of Yerima's plays are endless. Most of his plays will allow the director the opportunity to create and explore. This will give room for greater theatrical experimentation.

Moving scripts; Yerima's scripts can 'move themselves' on stage. Therefore, a Director's work during picturization and composition will be minimal, for most of Yerima's lines are loaded with self-imposed-spectacles and these are vehicles for stage picturization. Master of perfect stage instructions and iconography; Yerima's stage instructions are as clear, precise and simple to decode as his invented dialogue.

A medley of Western and African theatrical aesthetics; Though mostly subsumed in the defense of his artistic works, Yerima has made a perfect combination of Western and African theatrical aesthetics into most of his plays.

Directing the Plays of Ahmed Yerima: Some Suggestions

The artistic director should not direct plays to please the playwright. He must therefore determine, from the onset, what he wants to make out of his theatre. For the plays of Yerima, the director must be a critical and fertile brain for good script analysis. This will help him to overcome the burden of endless interpretations that Yerima's plays engender.

Yerima's plays must not be treated at its surface reality. Directors must note that Yerima may be simple with word usage but his dialogue is often-times misleading. A knack for research and an ability to read in-between lines will help directors to break Yerima's initial deception in most of his plays.

A director in the artistic direction of Yerima's plays must be a rounded artist. He must understand the nuances involved in the complex web of the African total theatre idioms while celebrating at the same time, the saturated Western theatre aesthetics. He must understand the interrelation of art forms. Adelugba (218) captures this very clearly:

The aesthetic exploration of the art of direction has shown that the past masters' advice to the young student of directing to acquire as cosmopolitan and catholic a knowledge of the arts as possible is sound... he, perhaps more than any other artist, derives great benefit from recognizing the interrelationships among the various forms of art.

If he cannot sing, dance or drum, he needs experts in these areas if he wants to make a meaning out of his theatrical directions. The potential director of Yerima's plays must understand the thesis and synthesis, the theories and ideologies that Yerima has frequently romanced with and used as vessels in his creative writing. Factionalism, reception theory, tragic canons, historicism, Brechtian epic and alienation effects and so on must be properly located within the saturated expanse of Yerima's repertory. To direct Yerima's plays, directors must understand the multicultural nature of the Nigerian nation. Directing Yerima must necessarily make the prospective director to be a willing cultural ambassador for Yerima's plays transcend borders of discourse.

Yerima's theatre of literature should be made to wear the

garb of theatre of performance. All wordy and lengthy dialogue must be broken down to comprehensible proportion. New characters can be created and theatre technicalities can be introduced to beef-up the endless dialogue. This, itself, is artistic deconstruction which we have contextualized as "the production of a new play, a new style yet of the same text" (Musa, 74). Uwemedimo Atakpo (a Nigerian theatre director) also used this style in his radical production of Sonny Sampson Akpan's *Comments* (a one-man, one-act play). Stephen Inegbe recalls that:

As directed by Uwemedimo Atakpo, *Comments* displays, to a considerable extent, the creative freedom of a director without unnecessarily endangering and distorting the focus of the playwright. Evolving a style of the total theatre concept, Atakpo incorporated fourteen other characters who performed as actors, dancers and musicians in a play meant for one...(Inegbe,69).

We have used this style for the production of many successful (we think) productions.

Directors must not direct Yerima as Yerima might have directed himself before. It is suggested that prospective directors of the plays of Yerima should watch Yerima's productions and his past recorded video-cassettes. However, this attraction of wanting to know the working system and past theatrical directions of Yerima's plays should not be abused or used to turn directors into copy-cats. Directors should give new interpretations to the plays of Yerima. Furthermore, directors of the plays of Yerima should endeavour to study Soyinka's plays for there are meeting points between the works of these two Nigerian playwrights. If Soyinka is complex, Yerima is *not* too simple.

Conclusion

Researchers and scholars in the theatre and drama of Yerima

must be critically objective. This is because Yerima can only get to the top through sincere criticisms which have helped the likes of Soyinka and Osofisan. As much as there are distractions and directorial problems that prospective directors may likely encounter while contemplating the directing of Yerima's plays, we implore prospective directors to understand these directorial problems so as to enable them come to terms with the suggestions made on the theatrical direction of Yerima's plays.

It must be noted that the prospects of directing Yerima discussed above, and the suggestions made are inexhaustive. Prospective directors are, therefore, admonished to take them seriously as they direct Yerima's plays to the delight of the audience. They should remember that they are coordinators who must try (even if it is through psycho-semantics) to convince their other collaborators (actors and other designers) of their choice in the direction of Yerima's plays. In spite of the endless metaphor also, directors should consider the endless attractions in the directing of Yerima's plays.

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