

FROM EUPHORIA TO SURVIVAL QUEST: A PLAYWRIGHT'S DILEMMA IN AN ECONOMIC RECESSION

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Abstract

*A playwright's nightmare begins from the conception of the idea of a play through the gestation, delivery and nurturing period of writing. From onset, the playwright is aware that the drama genre has fewer readers compared to prose. Notwithstanding, the euphoria he experiences at the birth of his creation can only be compared to a woman that has given birth of a child. It is such that she forgets all the stress of nine months and the sharp pains in the labour room. However, unlike childbirth, the euphoria of the dramatist is short-lived as the reality of the stacked copies of the play in the house constantly reminds him of the dire need for his well-being or survival as a playwright. Using two of Ahmed Yerima's plays, *Pari* and *Akuabata*, this paper examines the effects of the present economic recession in the country on the playwright's quest for survival. Through descriptive and inferential survey methodologies, the paper reveals that the playwright's quest for survival is what gives him the euphoria to weather in storm in the quest for survival in the daunting period of economic recession.*

Introduction

The word, *playwright*, as it known today, was coined by Ben Johnson in his "Epigram 49". Because it had a negative connotation, Johnson refused to be referred to as a playwright. He preferred to be known as a poet. Also known as a dramatist, the playwright is the brain that provides the blue print for the other members of a production. He is a person who writes a play. The word, 'wright', is an archaic English term for a craftsman or builder. The word indicates a person who has created words, themes and other elements into a dramatic form.

Being a creator, the playwright from conceptualisation of the characters, dialogue, theme and setting, to the actual printed script, uses his experiences or that of others to create a work of art which is of educative or entertaining relevance. To achieve this, he uses his imagination to create plausible stories especially fictional ones. The playwright uses his pen to speak his mind about prevalent issues in his society. The issues might be economic, political, social or even religious.

Like other humans, the playwright is highly philosophical. He thinks really hard about life's important questions and analytically tries to proffer solutions. Through the

search for truth, the playwright is able to suggest answers to the questions in the minds of the members of the society. Though what is seen on paper is often an imitation or representation of the playwright's life experiences or the experiences of others, yet, it is often a blend with his creative imagination to present a work of art that has universal relevance. Without involving some level of imitation, it would be difficult for the playwright to adequately project the characters and make them well rounded.

Like all creative endeavours, the art of playwriting involves a lot of suspense and tension on the Playwright. Getting the finished play published, has serious anxiety attached to it that after completion, the euphoria of the playwright knows no bound. His joy is only comparable to a woman's successful delivery of a child which makes her forget all her past sorrows. However, this euphoria is soon replaced by the harsh reality of lack of ready market for plays.

Play writing is an art which like other arts, requires good input of creativity and artistic skills. Nigeria has had a good number of playwrights who draw from her cultural, socio-political and religious background to write plays which in one way or another are commentaries about the country or plays which proffer solutions to the ebbing problems in the society. Ifeanyi Ugwu says:

Nigerian playwrights have engaged in the writing of serious literary theatre of standard quality which deals with the multifaceted portrayal of the Nigerian state. The foremost precursors of literary theatre and their later counterparts had good intentions because they wrote to provide the reader with artistically admirable plays which deal with the historical, political and socio-economic problems of the country. Despite all this, many of the written plays were dismissed by some critics as being substandard, due to what they describe as their numerous short comings (23).

In the past few years preceding the outbreak of the global economic meltdown which seems to have got its toll in Nigeria, there seemed to have been an increase in the number of writers; both qualified and unqualified. Quite a number of the writers saw writing as a new business venture which could put food on their tables. Though some were genuine, yet, the reality of the recession and the ensuing hardship has been very instrumental in sifting the real playwrights from the business-inclined playwrights. This study therefore aims at exploring the effects of the economic recession on playwrights. To achieve this, the study tried to proffer solutions to the short-lived euphoria of the playwrights.

This study examines how the present recession, reduces the joy of the playwright who because he cannot sell his books, is forced to either stop writing or print only a few copies. The paper further considers the processes the playwright undertakes to arrive at the finished play. A knowledge of the process helps one to appreciate why the playwright's euphoria after the completed printing. There is a further examination of the psychological disposition of the playwright as he watches his finished plays stacked in a place in his house. Though there are many playwrights, the paper uses two plays of Ahmed Yerima as

case studies. A paper of this nature provides a residue of knowledge for the encouragement of genuine future playwrights.

Theoretical Framework

Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory began as collaboration with Dr. Josef Breuer in the 19th century. According to Neuringer:

Theatre historians credit Freud and his theories for being the prime impetus for the birth of the modern theatre. Although credited with being the "father" of the modern theatre, Freud was somewhat sceptical about its artistic merits and was certainly concerned about its emphasis on the irrational. However reluctant Freud was about modern dramaturgy, his ideas had a profound effect on playwrights, such as, Schnitzler and O'Neill, and through them was instrumental in freeing the theatre from its Victorian moral straitjacket. Freud's ideas also served as the background for other psychoanalysts interested in the theatre, especially Otto Fenichel... (1).

Freud's theory is that people's personalities are developed from childhood. The personality which consists of id, ego and superego controls people's behaviours from childhood till death. Though there are many aspects of Freud's theory, the aspect that concerns playwrights/dramatist is the "Psychoanalytic theory". It is the theory:

of personality organisation and the dynamics of personality development that guides psychoanalysis, a clinical method for treating psychopathology.... Psychoanalytic theory came to full prominence in the last third of the twentieth century as part of the flow of critical discourse regarding psychological treatments after the 1960s, long after Freud's death in his study emphasised the recognition of childhood events that could influence the mental functioning of adults. His examination of the genetic and then the developmental aspects gave the psychoanalytic theory its characteristics (*Wikipedia*).

Though Freud's theory of psychoanalysis has been criticised for its non-consideration of peoples' cultures and environments, yet, it is a known fact that people react "differently to similar situations" (*Wikipedia*). In analysing or watching a play, Freud's theory helps to clarify the meaning of the writing as well as the actions of the characters within the text or performance.

Another theory, which greatly influences playwrights, is the consensus theory. This theory is a fusion of logic and reality. John W. Gassner opines that:

A play lives by its logic and reality. Conceptual confusion is the disease that halts its pace, dulls its edge, and disturbs its balance. As has been noted, the disease is a nervous disorder, growing out of the playwright's

maladjustment to his environment. The technical symptoms, as diagnosed in the case of O'Neill, are the following: the characters are governed by whim or fate, rather than by conscious will (Lawson 146).

Thus, a play exists because there is a reader or audience when it is performed. Richard Abcarian and Marvin Klotz are of the opinion that the theories "focus on the interaction between the work and the reader, holding that, in a sense, a work exists only when it is experienced by the reader" (audience). Currant sums up the import of consensus when he says:

The consensus can only be used as a rough guide. In dealing with the advice on specific sources, the danger is almost the same. The only useful consensus which can be gleaned from this area is the broadest one of reading, thinking, and observing. Any potential playwright who makes an effort to do these things will stand a good chance of uncovering a productive source. To concentrate on, say, reading only a specific form of writing, or observing only certain classes of people would be ludicrous. Although some fields of observation and interest may, in the end, turn out to be the most productive, there is certainly no profit at all to be had in excluding a possible source for what are, in the final analysis, the theorists' prejudices. Thus, the consensus which can most readily be taken, from an aspect of drama which is not particularly well suited to this exercise, is the recognition that there are certain sources well-disposed to being the starting point to a play, but also that all others, in the right circumstances, are perfectly feasible. In the beginning, the playwright should always be open-minded (14-15).

Principles of Playwriting

From conception, through the gestation period to the period of the delivery of the play, much is needed in order to achieve a good play worthy of attention. A play must be well thought out to have a beginning, middle and end. The problems and solutions in the play must be plausible and able to fulfil the functions of education, correction, entertainment, re-construction or re-structuring. The problems should be able to lead to a climax and resolution.

Aristotle's principles of three unities; unity of time, unity of place and unity of action should guide the playwright in situating his story. Because drama is an imitation of life, it is important that people can identify with the setting, situations and timing in the play. Though evolving technology makes it possible to now have insight into the events and situations in other planets, yet, the actions would seem incomplete without human presence/characters.

Characterisation has to do with the inherent traits in a dramatic character. It is the trait that helps the character to be convincing in being the playwright's mouth piece for driving home his vision. It is supposed to be well rounded to be convincing in whatever effect/emotion it is meant to elicit. If it is tragic, the hero should have a convincing flaw

that would cause the audience to empathise with him. If comic, his traits and folly should be able to amuse people. According to Basil Wikina:

Creation of characters is one of the most important factors in playwriting. A writer must create to life as full-blooded individuals with strong emotions and convincing reactions to every situation. He should invent character with background he fully understands. He should know the age, occupation, social status, tribe and other special attributes or peculiarities of his characters (57).

Playwriting is often a translation of a story, a song, a poem or a proverb into an outline which after much time and skill have been infused turns out to be an appreciable form of art which gets perfected after much practice. Thus, choice of language and characterisation are also of serious importance in writing a play. Language may be simple, complex, poetic or ordinary. The language a character uses helps in explaining his personality, define his role and situate his type in the society.

Simple or complex plot is another principle which the playwright must be abreast with in his writing. Whatever choice, the plot should be well knitted that the absence of a part of the story would affect the whole play. Moreover, the story should be believable and filled with suspense sufficient to grip the audience or readers to see the resolution of the climax of the story.

The theme of the play could be either central or sub theme. Being the playwright's message to the society, the central idea should be well articulated that it leaves no doubt about its ability to communicate the right message. Since content forces the playwright to think deeper, re-arrange his thoughts and put his creative imagination to effective use, he uses the aesthetic principle or elements common to the play to constitute the techniques or forms. Since theatre is the imitation of life and not life itself, the playwright should be able to present live situations in a way that it would captivate audience's attention to see the solution proffered in the play.

Nigerian Playwrights

Nigeria has produced several generations of playwrights. There are first, second and third generations and an additional new breed or new generation playwrights. Alex Asigbo is of the view that the proponents of the different generations are based on ideological commitment and period of writing. For Soyinka's group (the first generation), it is cultural affirmation. To Julius-Adeoye, these first generation playwrights were concerned with "nationalistic ideals, cultural re-affirmation and historical re-engineering in their dramas" (2). Apart from the Nobel Laureate, Wole Soyinka, the first generation playwrights include James Ene Henshaw, J.P. Clark-Bekederemo, Ola Rotimi and Zulu Sofola.

For the second generation Nigerian playwrights, the ills of colonisation and post-colonial experiences took the front-burner. They were more radical and revolutionary in their writings.

They liked the Marxist`s dramatists craving for a just socio-political order in the Nigerian system by reflecting leadership crisis, military misadventure, national unity, political and ethnic rivalry, and state oppression of the people that plague the nation`s socio-culture and politics. Other issues that pervade their works include corruption and poverty, inadequate health care, environmental problems, and other socio-economic issues (Julius-Adeoye 3).

This group has Femi Osofisan, Bode Sowande, Esiaba Irobi, Tunde Fatunde, Emeka Nwabueze, Tess Onwueme, Sam Ukala, Wale Ogunyemi and others.

For the third generation, or the Ahmed Yerima`s group, experiences from their childhood are prominent in their works. This third generation playwrights include Iyorwuese Hagher, Sam Ukala, Ahmed Yerima, Irene Salami-Agunloye, Julie Okoh, Barclays Ayakoroma, Stella Oyedepo, Ben Tomoloju, Foluke Ogunleye and ABC Duruaku, among others. As Ademola Dasylyva opines:

The ideology of the Nigerian third generation dramatists is an expression of individual survivalism, placing emphasis on the survival of an individual in a chaotic society as opposed to socialism which was characterised in the works of the earlier playwrights. Ones` survival is self-dependent and not reliant on any governmental intervention (157).

However, Asigbo classifies himself, among other playwrights like Tracie Utoh-Ezeajugh, Rasaki Ojo Bakare, Victor Dugga, Tor Iorapuu, Emmanuel Dandaura, Greg Mbajiorgu, John Iwuh, Bunmi Julius-Adeoye, Toyin Abiodun, Chukwuma Anyanwu and Solomon Iguanre, as belonging to another generation, which he categorises as, “the new voices” (Asigbo 29). These new voices have been described as:

trouble makers, that will not allow these megalomaniacs to spend their ill-gotten wealth in peace but must criticise and prick their conscience? ... rabble-rousers, these restless souls that have continued to attack and vilify the status quo? (Asigbo 29).

To Asigbo, he cannot imagine himself being classified alongside his teachers, based on the fact that the earlier generation of playwrights either taught him or he read their plays; and so, he and his contemporaries could not be deemed to belong to those generations with them. However, the restlessness and challenge of the existing status quo found in the works of the so-called ‘new voices’ could also be seen in the works of earlier playwrights, especially the second and third generations.

The Playwright and the Economic Recession

The period of economic recession is one of the most difficult periods in a nation. It is a period of lack, general economic decline and is typically accompanied by a drop in the stock market, increase in unemployment and a decline in the housing market. Recession

entails insufficiency and total shortage of money to solve the needs of the members of the society where it is found. In a period of recession, families are often disintegrated because of lack. Some members of the family lack means of sustenance. Though a little less severe than depression, the government in power is usually blamed for the recession; or they pass the buck to the previous one, as experienced in Nigeria.

Nigeria was plunged into recession by the fall in oil prices. Because the country is dependent on oil as its main source of revenue, the fall in global oil prices, therefore affected every strata of the economy. The naira was devalued thereby causing investors to withdraw. Another factor which contributed to the recession is the stringent measures, which the Nigerian government put in place. As a result of this, most wealthy men preferred to stash their money or buy properties abroad. Furthermore, the shortage of foreign currency affected every strata of the society. Like rain, the art of playwriting has also felt the negative effect, as there has been a knell on publishing.

The Effects of Economic Recession on Playwrights

Because recession slumps the stock market, goods and services are difficult to sell, consumer power is reduced. As business earnings depreciate, there is a reduction in production. This means an increase in unemployment and scarcity of money in circulation. The basic needs of man are food, clothing and shelter. In a period of recession, satisfying the basic needs is the priority of people. The rat race for survival makes people to prioritise their need into scales of preferences. Reading plays somehow becomes secondary. In the first instance, the format or layout of plays makes it disadvantageous to some people as they find it difficult to understand the dialogues. More so, Myles-Munroe once said, "If you want to hide a treasure from a black man then put it in the pages of a book" (Masarira, *Online*). It is also believed that blacks do not write as much as the whites. This is supported by the statement that, "there is anecdotal evidence that African scholars do not write and publish as much as their... (Masarira, *Online*).

Where there are few writers, the competitive spirit to challenge the playwrights would be lacking. There would be limited materials for consultation. Also, the lack of reading culture among the Nigerian populace is a major problem which discourages burgeoning playwrights. This is because the fear of prospective buyers of the published plays is enough to discourage many would have been playwrights. Additionally, the art and science of playwriting requires research and hypotheses which needs to be tested before implementation. Therefore, if mini ethnography is needed it becomes difficult during recession due to lack of money. To get the register of the area of research, travelling is required and travelling needs money. Playwriting consumes a lot of cerebral energy because the brain thrives on glucose. The time that would have been used for creative enterprise would then be channelled into thinking about the next meal.

Biography of Ahmed Yerima

A playwright, dramatist, scholar, cultural administrator and educationist, Ahmed Parker Yerima was born on 8th May, 1957 in Lagos to Alhaji Musa T. Yerima, a police officer, and Hajiya Saidatu Yerima. He was Artistic Director of the National Troupe of Nigeria as well as General Manager of the National Theatre, Iganmu-Lagos; and one-time Artistic

Director of the Abuja Carnival. Celebrated winner of the Nigerian LNG Prize for Literature (2006), as well as the ANA/NDDC J.P. Clark's Drama Prize (2006), with his play, *Hard Ground*, Yerima studied at Baptist Academy, Lagos; Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife; and the Royal Holloway College, University of London, where he got his doctorate degree.

Currently a professor at the Department of Theatre Arts, Redeemers' University, Ede, Osun State, Ahmed Yerima researches on performance, culture, textual analysis and criticism. His hailing from a predominantly Moslem community as well as his attendance of a Missionary School have given him the advantage of understanding the multi-religious nature of his society. Being well versed in Igbo, Bini, Hausa, Yoruba and his Auchi dialect, he is a true Nigerian, well-equipped to write on the socio-political, cultural and historical issues of many parts of Nigeria. According to Gabriella Osamor and Nseobong Okon-Ekong, Yerima is "a truly detribalised Nigerian who sees himself as a cultural officer first and one who does not remember who his people are because to his mind; he belongs to all cultures and people".

As noted earlier, Ahmed Yerima has been classified as belonging to the third generation of Nigerian playwrights because of his pre-occupation with socio-political issues in his works. He is so prolific that listing the oeuvre of his works is arduous. However, some of his over sixty published plays include: *Heart of Stone*, *Abobaku*, *Iyase*, *Little Drops*, *The Trials of Oba Ovonramwen*, *The Bishop and the Soul*, *An Inspector Calls*, *Statement from Prison* and *The Last Grain of Wheat*. Others are *The Silent Gods*, *Dry Leaves on Ukan Trees*, *Attahiru*, *The Sisters*, *Idemili*, *Yemoja*, *The Lottery Ticket*, *Kaffir's Last Game*, *Ameh Oboni the Great*, *Otaelo* and *Hard Ground*, just to mention a few. He is also the author of two critical works on playwriting: *Basic Techniques in Playwriting* and *Discourse on Tragedy*. With so many plays and critical works to his credit, it could be said that Ahmed Yerima is the most prolific playwright, not only among his generation but among the whole generations of playwrights in Nigeria, if not Africa.

Ahmed Yerima as a Socio-Political Commentator

Man is a social being; and it is a fact that cannot be debated. Man exists, lives and operates in a society. Because human relation is an integral aspect of human existence, a playwright's impact is greatly felt when his works reflect the socio-political realities of his society. In reaction, the nation is supposed to encourage and appreciate the works of the playwright by taking heed to the issues in the play. To confirm this, Frederic Lorca says:

... a nation which does not help and does not encourage its theatre is if not dead, dying, just as the theatre which does not feel the social pulse, the historical pulse, the drama of its people, and catch the genuine colour of its landscape and its spirit, with laughter or with amusement hall, or a place for doing that dreadful thing known as "killing time" (cited in Asigbo 7-8).

Many of Yerima's plays centre on socio-political issues. Examples are: *Abobaku*, *Iyase*, *Little Drops*, *The Trials of Oba Ovonramwen*, *Pari*, *The Mirror Cracks*, *An Inspector Calls*,

Statement from Prison, The Last Grain of Wheat, Dry Leaves on Ukan Trees, Attahiru and Hard Ground, among others. Socio-political issues are the societal problems which have political undertones that affect members of the society one way or another.

In *Pari*, Yerima handles the story of the Chibok girls who he gave the major names of Shekau and any of the girls as Ibrahim and Hyelapari. Pari along with some other girls are kidnapped and forcibly married to the Boko Haram Islamic extremists. After two years of fruitless search and no hope of Pari's return, her mother converts to Islam hoping that her acceptance of the Islamist's god would make her daughter to be released. When Pari eventually returns, she returns with her son. Ibrahim's search for his family brings him to Pari's family house where he is eventually arrested. But before being taken away to Darak (barrack), Pari, who had been dumb, requests to be allowed to follow him. She says:

Pari: I want him to take me and my son along. I don't want him to go alone. Who will take care of him? ... I believe him ... Two years. For two years, I lived my life with him ... dodging bullets and bombs. He taught me how to clean his AK 47 gun, how to cry and how to muffle tears and pains with honour... (*Pari* 68).

From these words, Yerima comments that what began as a socio-political problem has got solution in individual choices. Ama's verdict of Ibrahim is:

Ama: I say no! He is a human thief. He stole my only child ... took my daughter's virtue ... and killed Vero's husband. He must die by the knife he has brandished so well (*Pari* 57).

In the first instance, getting Pari re-integrated became impossibility. Ama says:

Ama: You see what they brought back to us? The living carcass of our once dear sweet innocent daughter. Several times, she screamed in her sleep today. Even the sleeping drugs do not have any effect on her anymore.... We may need to add traditional medicine to her treatment (*Pari* 42).

By investigating the story of the Chibok girl, Yerima confirms what he said in a telephone interview with the researcher that, it is the Nigerian society which inspires his writing.

Evidence of socio-political theme is also seen in Yerima's *Akuabata*, where the sociological problem of women's relegated background role is explored. There is also a clash of public duty as a King and as a lover. In the play, Olanma (*Akuabata*: wealth has come) is supposed to be married to a deity (Iyieke). But she marries Isiugwu, a stranger with a different culture. Instead of being the financial pillar of the home, Isiugwu does the household chores, while Olanma goes to farm and provides for the home. Rather than be the rightful Eze ogo of Ohafia, Isiugwu asks:

Isiugwu: And Olanma? What do I tell her? Do I go to her and say: “Thank you for bee (*sic*) being my wife for thirty years. I have had enough of you. Thank you for the food, and tender care. Thank you for our only child. I am off to my village to become king. I have just been told that kings don’t marry commoners. And even then, you are now too old to fit in. Kings only marry princesses” (*Akuabata* 19).

This blending of politics with culture of a people confirms Yerima’s words that, he allows the influence of other writers. This is because drawing from culture is peculiar to the first generation of playwrights. Yerima says:

I got introduced to Soyinka’s works. In school I liked *Madmen and Specialists*. I liked Chekhov, I liked Ibsen, Samuel Beckett, Eugene Ionesco (especially Ionesco’s *The Chairs*, I loved that play). I wrote my plays around those plays at that time. In the early plays, I took a little bit of Soyinka’s anger and a little bit of my influence from those other playwrights, until I met Brecht. In my postgraduate, I settled down to write other plays because I felt there was no need to be that angry ... *Hard Ground* is perhaps my famous play. The need to write *Hard Ground* is based on my background, my relationship with Soyinka. The playwright must be relevant to his society and must be proactive, must think for the society and at times also to pre-empt the society.... Wole Soyinka told me I must be relevant. I cannot sit down and create art for art sake. I cannot be writing about irrelevances – marital issues and such (not that they are irrelevant) – but when there are issues of life and death involved. When immediate issues, generational issues of the society, or when issues of the future of the existence of my country are involved, I cannot remain passive. An individual within the society but also as a playwright, I need to say something; I need to state how I feel (*Online*).

The above influence is a reminder of the Freud’s psychoanalysis theory. Soyinka taught Yerima never to write about irrelevancies when there are better socio-political issues that can affect the decorum in the society. Yerima’s plays are divided into historical realism plays, religious realism plays and socio-political realism plays. Whatever theme he chooses to explore, he pays serious attention to proffering solutions to the immediate societal problems.

From a Playwright’s Euphoria to Survival Quest

Playwriting is both an art and science which uses human acts and emotions to experiment the effects on a larger society. Playwriting in Nigeria is like seed sprouting on a ‘hard ground’. Apart from lack of market for the finished play text, there is no ready fund to assess to help in the publication. Thus, the playwright has the onerous task of incubating the idea, having it gestated, getting it written and then sourcing the fund for its publication.

After all the stress, the euphoria of the playwright at the completion of the published work is better left to the imagination. With the onset of recession, the playwrights' quest for survival becomes even more. This is because people need to settle their more pressing needs before talking about books. Also, even in the bookstalls, the presences of older renowned playwrights intimidate the new authors and make their books unnoticed.

Conclusion

The writing of a play is an art and science which brings to fore the embodiment of a researched process. Being an art, playwriting requires a deliberate use of aesthetics. As science, playwriting involves a careful study of a particular topic, culture or a people. By making a systematic observation of the issue or people in a particular environment, the playwright then adds aesthetics to bring out a play that has societal relevance. Christiana Oboshi confirms this idea when he reiterates that:

the playwrights are involved in making dramatic statements about burning issues such as ineffective leadership, bribery.... This places the playwright in the role of a watchdog of the society (213).

Based on the above role, the playwright is also a socio-political commentator who is able to rescue his nation from the pains and effects of recession. It is true that:

during the recession, economic hardship knows no limits and boundaries, it affects livelihood of everybody in one-way or the other- and this naturally gives impetus to survival instincts as people work harder and more effective to tackle the new economic realities (Agbugah *Online*).

The adage, "the pen is mightier than the sword" seems to be most appropriate at times like this. Though there had been instances where writers like Dele Giwa and Ken Saro-Wiwa even paid with their lives; and Wole Soyinka was imprisoned; yet, the deaths and imprisonment have not ended the vision of playwrights. If anything, the buried truths resurrected and have produced the harvests of recession now plaguing the country. Playwrights are guardians of a 'sacred mandate', whose duties are not just to draw from the culture and condemn the evils, but they must point the way forward and proffer solutions in their writings. Asigbo supports this position when he says:

the artist is not a frivolous character or jester as he is most often seen by an ignorant public. He serves as the memory of men and watchdog of communal ethos and in fact remains bulwark and last bastion of defence against tyrants and deviants who often seduce the world with illusions of grandeur (Asigbo 11).

Being one of the renowned Nigeria playwrights, Yerima has through his works established the fact that a playwright is committed to the happenings around him and so has the right to express his individuality. Though the playwright's vision should go beyond

art for art sake, yet his euphoria at seeing his completed work should give him the satisfaction that is beyond monetary equivalence. By combining rules, knowledge and mastery which is the basis of consensus theory, the playwright should bring out a good play capable of proffering solutions to the pressing societal problems. However, in applying this theory, Gallaway, Rowe and Seldon believe that:

ultimate respect for the playwright's own inspiration.... It is agreed that this creative impulse may be channelled, but great care must be taken that it is not stifled or adulterated. Seldon is a virtual echo of these two writers. He wants the playwright to use his theory to clarify thinking but never to fundamentally change the "basic discovery" which must come from inspiration.... Because they wrote on the basis of instinct, rather than from exact knowledge. Instinct may lead a man once, or several times, to create a masterpiece, but as sheer instinct it may lead him just as often to create a failure (cited in Currant 8, 9).

Recommendations for Playwrights

In the light of the foregoing, this paper recommends as follows:

- a) Like other business ventures, it would be advisable for playwrights to reduce the cost of production by printing the quantity they know would be easily marketed. This is because of publishing that may not be sold for years only ties down the money that could have been circulation.
- b) "Since downsizing is inevitable during a recession" (Agbugah *Online*), the playwright would be doing himself a great favour by learning the rudimentary things about publishing. If the playwright can undertake the simple things like typesetting, dummyming and others, he would have saved some money which would help reduce the cost of production.
- c) Because of the inflation, many people opt for low quality printing. For a generation which loves quality products, this becomes a hindrance to the purchase let alone reading. With no interest on the quality of the book, the confidence of the customers is lost and may never be regained.
- d) The need to review the marketing strategy of the plays cannot be over-emphasized. The whole world is one global village of which social media is the link. Many people prefer soft copies of reading materials than to carry hard copies no matter how light. Rather than waste money on producing hard copies of plays, playwrights should link up with online marketers or domain owners for the uploading of their plays of which they would be paid after the sales. In fact, internet sales are so well organised that the sales cannot be challenged. Moreover, it provides avenue for better global recognition since the social media can reach where the playwright may never have thought of reaching.

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