

**DIRECTING ECO-THEATRICALITY ON THE NIGERIAN STAGE:
LESSONS FROM AHMADU BELLO UNIVERSITY STUDIO THEATRE**

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Abstract

The intersection between theatre and environmental concerns dates back to the origins of theatre itself. Years of continuous intersection and interaction between the two have given rise to a dynamic field known as ecological theatre or what may be referred to as eco-theatricality. Extant episteme in the area recognizes the potential of theatre to contribute to environmental consciousness to harnessing the transformative power of the stage to engage audiences, evoke emotional responses, and promote environmental awareness. In the continent for example, place, space, things, objects and people are named and known according to the nature of relationship between them and the environment. Within this context, the environment is reified and apprehended as a concrete material rather than a mere object. It is nurtured and, in many cases, worshipped in ways that result in diverse mimetic arts, poetics and aesthetics. In this paper, I draw from select stage productions from the Ahmadu Bello University Studio Theatre and seek to inspire theatre practitioners, educators, and policymakers to consider alternative ways of making theatre that puts the environment at the forefront of production. The researcher considered two eco-friendly play productions; the production of Ahmed Yerima's *Mojagbe* and Don Pedro Obaseki's *Azagidi: When gods Die*. The choice of these two productions lies in the deliberate attempts of the directors to use reusable materials to create a green theatre *mis en scene*. The researcher also wants to emphasize that eco-directing is possible even when working with canonical play-texts that do not directly address issues of the environment. The theory of Eco-Theatricality is used as a conceptual bastion to understand the rupture that has taken place in man's exploitation of the environment and the dramatist's conscious efforts at providing solutions to the problems posed by climate change.

Keywords: African drama, Drama village, Eco-theatricality, Environment.

Introduction

Theatre has long been regarded as a medium for reflecting and critiquing society, addressing social issues, and provoking thoughts. In recent years, the environmental crisis has emerged as one of the most pressing global concerns, necessitating urgent action and awareness. One of the ways within which the narrative of environmental crisis has been developed and disseminated is through the conventional media of television, radio, and the internet as well as other digital-inspired productions. A close reading of the messaging of the SDGs on environmental sustainability and climate justice, for example, suggests that its curators mostly depend on uniform communication channels to sensitize people. Alternative communication conduits at the micro level such as theatrical performances expressed through festivals, carnivals,

music, dance, drama, traditional games, and other forms of performances have neither been relegated nor have gained little traction where they have been used.

In one of the conferences I attended outside the continent, an attendee posed a thought-provoking question; “what does live theatre in ‘Black Africa’ secure in terms of climate change and justice? Another was quick to ride on the probing of the previous questioner to submit that live theatrical productions in Black Africa thrive on the depletion of the environment through its choice of materials for set design. She went further to ask ‘How can you reconcile Nigeria’s *irreverence* to the environment vis-à-vis Nigeria’s growing theatre scene’. As perplexing, maybe ‘racist’, as the question and assertive statement may read, it called for introspection in the ways we make theatre in Nigeria. More, it follows my experience between 2017 through to 2022, a period within which I have had the opportunity to see over a dozen theatre productions, costume design and performances. One thread that tied these productions together is the emphatic use of wood, rubber, trees/plants and other forms of materials which run down the environment. Could this be the reason Nigerian theatre is fingered as one of the drivers of environmental degradation?

With the growing recognition of the urgent environmental challenges facing our planet, artists and cultural practitioners are increasingly exploring ways to incorporate sustainability and environmental consciousness into their creative processes. The theatre artist is not left out. The intersection between theatre and environmental concerns is in itself not new. It dates back to the origins of theatre itself. Years of continuous intersection and interaction between the two have given rise to a dynamic field known as ecological theatre or what may be referred to as eco-theatricality. Extant episteme in the area recognizes the potential of theatre to contribute to environmental consciousness to harnessing the transformative power of the stage to engage audiences, evoke emotional responses, and promote environmental awareness. To fully harness the constructive power of the stage, the place of the director cannot be overlooked.

In the context of directing on the Nigerian theatre stage, eco-theatrical expression poses both exciting opportunities and specific challenges. Directors play a central role in shaping the artistic vision and overall experience of a theatrical production. They have the power to incorporate eco-friendly production practices, such as sustainable set designs, responsible use of materials, and energy-efficient technologies. It is also within the context of the director to collaborate with other artists to develop narratives that address environmental issues, provoke thought, and inspire audiences to reevaluate their relationship with the environment. As a budding playwright and auteur theatre director, I see the compositeness in theatre-making and the environment expressed in the meta-dialogical relationships between the stage actors, environmental actors, and more-than-human actors. I hear the voice of the environment when stage actors speak; I see men and women embodiments of plant-life and I think of the audience as forest. The environmental conditioning and space of our theatre at Drama Village in Ahmadu Bello University Zaria offers me the opportunity to live close to the earth and every other thing that is nature; that gives me a sense of being and being part of a community; that reminds me of the quintessence

of the non-infringement of the more-than-human space (environment) and the attending existential catastrophic outcome that may grip humanity if or when the environment is not given due consideration.



**Plate 1: The ecological intersection and aerial view of Drama Village,
Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria**

At the Drama Village, birds chirp with the orchestra of crickets providing backups for the swooshing trees. The surrounding trees offer enough solace when the harsh weather of seasons bites and the earthy huts remind me of my roots. The life force of the environment instructs me and propels my auteur theatre. For me, Drama Village offers itself as a text to every creative mind. I align my thought with the position of Adeoye's model of eco-theatricalism anchored on a quadrupedal aesthetics of "mythopoetic culture, textual imagination, dramaturgy of total theatre ecological idiom and the performativity of adaptation" (89). Of these four models, I am particularly interested in two; that is, the content of textual imagination and the dramaturgy of total theatre ecological idiom.

For Adeoye, the content of textual imagination is anchored on the belief that every "text is expected to lead to theatricality" (89). What this means is that the idea of text transcends the words we speak or read in books. Text in this sense could be behavioural, contextual and environmental. The environment is reified here as text; a more-than-human text capable of rupturing human existence. Adeoye contends that

even though textual imagination is very important in the creative process, “the total theatre ecological idiom, which includes dance, music, drama, pantomimic dramatization, magical display, invocation, evocation, chanting, puppetry, masquerading and many more, is a motivator for the artistic director to give vitality to play-textual conditions. He states that:

It is the duty of the artistic director to either use the workshop theatre (if he intends to celebrate the ‘limit of textuality’) or create total theatre aesthetics from a published play of the ecological school he intends to direct. If he intends to adopt the workshop style, everybody in his theatre is a creator. He will only serve as the coordinator of the series of theatrical activities created towards the whole. (Adeoye 94).

The above statement speaks of the centrality of the artistic director in ascribing relatable meanings to the more-than-human texts in performance. In this paper, I draw from select stage productions from the Ahmadu Bello University Studio Theatre and seek to inspire theatre practitioners, educators, and policymakers to consider alternative ways of making theatre that puts the environment at the forefront of production. I will consider two of the many eco-friendly play productions produced in our theatre, that is, the production of Ahmed Yerima’s *Mojagbe* and Don Pedro Obaseki’s *Azagidi: When gods Die*. My choice of these two productions is conditioned by three factors. One is the deliberate use of reusable materials to create a green theatre *mis en scene*. The second is the meta-dialogical relationship between directing the actors’ movements and the more-than-human environment and the third factor is that eco-directing is possible when working with canonical play-texts that do not directly address issues of the environment.

Conceptual Clarifications: Ecology and Eco-dramaturgy

‘Ecology’ is a word used to describe “the interconnected relationships of the living world, that is, the study of animals and plants, our habitat and environment, as well as the analysis of the interrelationships between us all’ (Giannachi and Stewart 20). It may also be used to refer to how human beings relate to each other vis-à-vis our environment, and the more-than-human world. Thinking of ecology as home unbundles the term from the stronghold of biological science and opens it up, creating different modes of engagement, which in turn could give rise to new ways of thinking and making performance ecologically. This accounts for Morton’s submission that ecological thought is not just about the sciences of ecology, but the scientific thinking of arts, philosophy, literature, music, and culture especially as they strive to imagine how we live together within an environment.

For Morton, ecology is profoundly about coexistence (4). Art, philosophy and performance can reveal, question and imagine ‘how we live together’ in differentiated and unequal ways (Morton 4). Although all art can be considered ecological in its material form, Morton contends that “ecological art, and the ecologicalness of all art, is not just *about* something (trees, mountains, animals, pollution, and so forth) but it *is* something, or maybe *does* something’ (Morton, 11). The theatre and performance practices ‘do something’: they reveal, critique, problematise and extend the thinking

of ecological relationships in one way or another. It follows that human beings and the environment are involved in a process of co-creating or de/constructing society, knowledge, stories, text and eco-performances. From this perspective, dramaturgy can be seen as a holistic approach to the way theatre and performance make meaning, which can be through analysis of play texts, but also through other elements of performance such as the 'use of space, visual elements, sound, audience proxemics and other aspects that might be less directly addressed by play texts' (Turner 3).

Early thinking in drama and ecology scholarship developed from ecocriticism in literature has people like Cheryll Glotfelty describe ecocriticism as "the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment" (xviii). Lisa Woynarski further adds that ecocriticism takes an earth-centred approach to literary studies" (120). For Woynarski, performance and ecology could be thought of as taking an earth-centred approach to theatre and performance, viewing performance as part of the larger world which "does not float above the material world in some aesthetic ether, but, rather, plays a part in an immensely complex global system, in which energy, matter, *and ideas* interact" (xix). According to her: this thinking is useful in relation to performance and ecology, and in perhaps reconfiguring the binary that relegates theatre and performance to 'culture' (as opposed to nature). Theatre and performance do not exist in a vacuum; they impact and are impacted by the world of social-ecological systems and relationships. Eco-dramaturgy speaks to this relationship by asking how theatre interacts with the world (Woynarski 120).

The contention from the above is that theatre or performance may not necessarily be tied to traditional culture in ways that exclude interactivity with issues of political economy at the global scale. Adeoye conceives eco-theatre as a theatre whose motif and aesthetics are dedicated to the exposure of environmental problems and the dramatist's conscious efforts at providing solutions to the problems posed by climate change (86). Theresa May sees it as theatre and performance-making that considers environmental reciprocity and community at the centre of its theatrical and thematic intent' (4). May's foundational work applies the term predominantly to play texts and intent, attending to the injustices of ecological crisis (Woynarski 124). Eckersall, Monaghan and Beddie conceive it as the connectivity of relationships between people, objects, natural forces and their interaction in the human/natural environment' (20).

For Victor Ihidero, it is a way of apprehending how rituals or theatrical practices make ecological meaning and interact with the material more-than-human world which attends to our different experiences, complexities and injustices (83). Ihidero's position largely follows Lisa Woynarski's idea of eco-dramaturgy which requires a shift in perspective to de-centre the human, question neoliberal environmental logic and re-imagine the nature/culture binary. Like Woynarski, Ihidero probes the relationship between Egbesu ritual performance and the environment by considering the dramaturgical strategies that offer new ways of thinking about material encounters with the world, and critiquing the anthropocentric binaries of ecological knowledge and worldviews. The question for Woynarski is: how can theatre and performance reveal the way different bodies (human and non-human) are exposed to

through environmental injustice and unequal climate change effects? How can theatre and performance, potentially through erasure or omission of places or people, throw into relief the multiple and intersecting forms of oppression and marginalization connected to ecology? How can an intersectional analysis open up new ways of thinking about ecological performance? (Woynarski 121).

The aforementioned questions intend to bring about rupture in the ways we relate to the ecological or environmental text. To this end, one can argue that an eco-dramatical analysis considers modes of viewing and making theatre, the modes of narrativity, values, politics, ethics, production and reception of the arts. In the Nigerian playwriting scene for example, we have seen works that convey eco-dramatic currents. Some of them are Wole Soyinka's *The Swamp Dwellers*, Ameh Elaigwu's *The Climate of Change*, Greg Mbajiorgu's *Wake Up Everyone*, Ben Binebai's *My Life in the Burning Creeks*, Barclays Ayakoroma's *A Chance to Survive*, among others. While there is a motif of eco-dramaturgy in these works, there are also other plays rooted in mytho-poesy that portray more-than-human themes. The works of J.P Clark, Wole Soyinka, Ola Rotimi, and Wale Ogunyemi are also rich in this regard. Deep-seated in the works of these playwrights is the leitmotif of environmentalism. To produce their plays on stage as well as the plays of some contemporary eco-playwrights may pose a challenge for the director. In other words, how would the theatre director, direct movements or create a *mis en scene* in a play such as Wale Ogunyemi's *Langbodo* without committing ecocide? What options are available to the director in directing Ben Binebai's *Drums of the Delta* while also safeguarding the environment?

For me as a director, I am interested in the intersection between humans and nature, and nature and culture. I perceive the environment as text and a site, as a form of representation and spect-acting, as performance and as rupture. I align with Una Chaudhuri's claim that the first step towards an ecological theatre is to acknowledge the rupture between humans and nature that theatre participates in (28). My idea of directing ecology falls within the third wave of intellection on eco-drama. As a way of explication, it is imperative to consider the waves of eco-drama. The first wave of scholars-practitioners (Cless 1992; Munk 1994; Marranca 1996, etc) of ecology performance drew from political theatre strategies such as reframing sites, resistance, audience participation and community engagement to enact ecological thinking. The second wave was marked by detachment of critical thought and reading of performance and ecology. The detachment was, and hitherto in Nigeria is, anchored on the lack of critical engagements on what performance is and does to the environment. For example, Wole Soyinka and J.P Clark like to open or plot their plays within the parenthesis of ritual sacrifices to appease the more-than-human world. While their works have received more reading from the perspective of nature-culture criticism, aspects of the human-nature interaction have not been fully explored. Only a fringe conversation or criticism exists on the theorization of Wole Soyinka and J.P Clark as eco-dramaturgs.

The third wave of performance and ecology is characterized by contestations of binaries such as centre/margin or black/white view of reality maintained by colonial discourse. For the third-wave eco-dramaturg, the focus shifts to *alterity*, that is, a

distinction among ideas rather than a black-or-white way of viewing the world. The dramas of Greg Mbajiorgu, Ameh Elaigwu, and Ben Binebai, among others, fall within this wave. While these contemporary playwrights have immensely contributed to perpetuating the visibility of ecological thought in Nigerian drama, focus should be paid to how their works may be directed on stage given the challenges that come with staging ecology. For the most part, the staging of climate change plays has been accused of poor dramatization which fails to engage the audience members in environmental thinking. Heddon and Mackey claim that:

Where the balance is tilted towards the emotional narratives of human relationships, those who seek sophisticated theatre addressing climate change are disappointed'... Many of these plays... are aligned to Hulme's 'deficit model' of communicating climate change, in which the assumption is that scientists have 'the truth', which they only need to impart to the public for them to understand climate change. (175)

As insular as the above assertion by Heddon and Mackey appears, many eco-drama playwrights as well as experimentalists have not also, in their part, written a well-made or three-dimensional eco-play that challenge the claims of ecologists, or environmental scientists who conceive eco-dramaturgy as lacking in criticality. As Woynarski rightly notes, "Instead of a deficit model, ideas of diversity, variety, circularity and multivocality are more effective in engaging the public on climate change" (127). There is even the possibility of extending Woynarski's submission to the frontiers of critiquing or directing ecology through eco-theatre or what Abdulrasheed Adeoye refers to as 'eco-theatricalism'.

Theoretical Explications

Eco-theatricality forms the theoretical ground upon which this paper makes certain claims. It is a concept that evolved from eco-theatre. Eco-theatre is a word used to describe the type of theatre whose motif and aesthetics are dedicated to the exposure of environmental problems and the dramatist's conscious efforts at providing solutions to the problems posed by climate change (Adeoye 86). *Leader's Theatre* defines it as "performances that tackle the crucial environmental issues of our day with humour, song, and heart." (n.p.) It is a holistic approach to theatre-making that centres around climate and environmental justice in content, process, and production.

The frame of analysis of eco-theatricality is anchored on five components such as environmental content and themes, sustainable practices; performance space and ecological sensibilities; audience engagement and empowerment; collaborative and interdisciplinary approaches; and evaluation and advocacy. Without the director, all of these cannot find expression in theatre production. Through the creativity of the director, eco-theatricality can incorporate environmental content and themes within theatrical narratives, performances, and productions. This involves exploring ecological challenges, human-nature relationships, climate change, biodiversity, environmental justice, and sustainable futures. By weaving these themes into the fabric of theatrical storytelling, the theatre director can provoke thoughts, inspire empathy, and foster a deeper understanding of environmental issues among the audience.

Eco-theatricality promotes the integration of sustainable production practices within theatre operations. This includes considerations such as utilizing environmentally friendly materials, implementing waste reduction and recycling initiatives, and adopting eco-conscious set and costume design. Tanja Beer's work with eco-scenography is one of the leading initiatives in this regard. Her works reverberate the third aspect of eco-theatricality, that is, performance space and ecological sensibilities. Within the framework of performance space and ecological sensibilities, the theatre director considers the ecological impact of set constructions and embraces environmentally friendly design principles, and explores opportunities for sustainable energy sources. Here, natural elements such as water, plants and earth within the performance space are integrated within the world of the production to create a sensory and immersive experience that connects the audience with the natural world. Our open-air theatre at the Ahmadu Bello University Zaria fits well into this frame. It creates an immersive experience that connects the audience to the natural world. It encourages the audience to reflect on their relationship with the environment and take action towards sustainability.

The Ahmadu Bello University School of Drama thrives on collaborative and interdisciplinary approaches to staging theatre. Our theatre is a sort of artists' salon bringing together artists, scientists, environmentalists, and community members to contribute during our theatre workshops. This interdisciplinary collaboration encourages the exchange of knowledge, ideas, and perspectives, leading to innovative and impactful theatrical experiences. We believe that by integrating scientific research, environmental data, and community narratives, our theatre enriches the people and increases in relevance. For many world theatres as well as theatre departments in Nigeria, performances have always taken the form of 'text to stage'. For us, it is not completely so given our relativity to our environment. Our focus is on 'stage to text'. Here, we co-create our text collaboratively. Facilitated by the director, we cut, nail, move, replace, rewrite, transpose and adapt scenes and dialogue to fit our society. In some cases, as in the production of "Queen Amina" in 2021, we have had to use only one scene from Wale Ogunyemi's version and another from Ahmed Yerima's. Others were sourced from Turunku, Queen Amina's birthplace; key informants from the Emir of Zaria's palace as well as other Hausa ethnographers. While this may pose a further challenge regarding authorship for the external world, we thrive on dramaturgical productions. To proceed, it is imperative to examine how all of these items work out in two of our theatre workshop productions.

Eco-Directing in Ahmadu Bello University Studio Theatre

Eco-theatricality and eco-dramaturgy form the analytical tools used in arriving at conclusions in this paper. Pardon me for digressing from the banal approach of considering directing from the lens of actor's movement, speech, dialogue, character delineation and psychology etc to the process involved in co-creating, designing and construction, and thematic explorations of human-nature and nature-culture exegesis of ecology. I anchor my discussion on the recent theatre workshop productions of Ahmed Yerima's *Mojagbe* and Don Pedro Agbonifo-Obaseki's *Azagidi: When Gods*

Die as well as draw from past productions within the last five years. A better way to preface this discussion is to introduce the legend of Queen Amina. Mostly reported as the only female Emir to have ruled in the Zazzau Emirate, her story, for the most part, has remained vague and hotly contested both by the curators of Zazzau Emirate, historians as well as playwrights. While Wale Ogunyemi's and Ahmed Yerima's versions of her legend have focused on her might as a ruler, leadership skills and conquests, her predatory femininity and viciousness, other indigenous playwrights and historians have totally displaced her in Zazzau history.

Performing her legend within the framework of primordial Hausa society poses an ecological challenge to a director. Firstly, in set construction and the *mis en scene* of the production. The production workshop was facilitated by Steve Daniel and Victor Ihidero in 2021. The architecture of the A.B.U Studio provided a suitable environmental background to use sustainable production materials in the design of the theatre. The story was largely sourced from within the Zaria Emirate and Turunku, Amina's birthplace rather than from play texts. The performance opens with a recreation of a museum that houses the statues of Margaret Ekpo, Hajiya Gambo Sawaba, Queen Idia, Sarauniyya Daurama, Princess Inikpi and other historical heroines. The earthiness of Drama Village helps us to recreate the time within which these women lived. The peri-actors were made from *Barakanci*, a fallen dry product of a tree that populates the university community and dry coconut peel obtained from the market. The materials were flattened and compacted into plain planks and were used to construct the sets and all other materials that require the use of wood such as wooden cutlasses and spears. Rather than run down the environment by falling trees or cutting plants, the production team opted for reusable materials to construct the sets in ways that safeguard the ecological environment.



Plate 2: Scenic Outcome of the use of *Barakanci* materials used in the production of Queen Amina. Source: A.B.U Studio Theatre

Apart from Queen Amina and other chiefs the in council, sack cloths made from either cotton or bags were used. For me as a director, the purpose was to first and foremost facilitate the actors on the possibility of theatre without committing ecocide. During the workshop, questions of sustainability of the production materials were of course

asked and the response was for the students to consider the materials as transitory to a better developed and compact material. This experiment was however introductory even though it was deemed successful by those (Anna Oluyori 2022, Ihidero 2022, and Zoure 2023) who have either presented a seminar paper or have published academic papers from the experiment.

The experiment heightened in the production of Ahmed Yerima's *Mojagbe* and Don Pedro Obaseki's *Azagidi* as the entire production depended on reusable materials sourced from either waste products such as dry grasses, mats, coconut peel, fallen dry stems or branches within the university, dyed shredded old cloths pieced together, amongst others.



Plate 3: Scenes from the production of *Mojagbe*.
Source: A.B.U Studio Theatre

The plots of the respective plays were directed in such a way that the story formed some kind of meta-narratives with actions on stage to complement the catastrophic end of the two main characters, Mojagbe in *Mojagbe* and Azagidi in *Azagidi*. The performance of *Azagidi* tells the story of the passion of Azagidi and Igbaghon. Azagidi the invincible great warrior embarked on a journey to the more-than-human world in search of new challenges. In so doing, he destroys men, women, the ecology and everything that stands in his way until he gets to the depth of underwater where he

meets and eventually falls in love with the river goddess, Igbaghon. Igbaghon forfeits her position, her rights and privileges in the spirit world against the advice of Olokun, god of the oceans and Orhue her sister. She takes human form and follows Azagidi to the human world. Azagidi's quest to become King makes him abandon Igbaghon, whom he married and who bore him two sons, to marry Uvbi, the princess of Udo with the ambition of becoming king after Ogie, Uvbi's father. To gain the king's trust, Azagidi orders the banishment of Igbaghon from the land and deprives her of her two sons. Mocked and with nowhere to turn, Igbaghon kills Princess Uvbi and King Ogie and the two sons of Azagidi – an act of vengeance that serves as eternal torture for Azagidi's betrayal.



**Plate 4: Scenes from the Performance of Azagidi:
When gods Die: Source: A.B.U Studio Theatre**

While some of the audience members read the performance from the lens of greed and ambition of one man, others caught the metatextual ecological motif of the play. Azagidi's infringement into the ecology destroys him, his family and his community. Within the directorial vision, Igbaghon's lamentation is the lamentation of the forest and water-world which Azagidi has destroyed. As she cries in her woes,

it is hoped that Azagidi, and by extension, the human world, hearkens to the pain of her slow torment. The failure to hearken to Igbaghon is the *raison d'être* for the catastrophic end of Azigidi and the Udo community. Here, the characterization of Azagidi and Igbaghon is representational of the relationships between human beings and plant or water life. While the bionetwork of the environment made Azagidi, Ogie and the community to thrive, they failed to acknowledge their source and instead ran it down until it came back to bite them. Igbaghon's third lamentation and invocation for death foretells doom.

Great gods! Olokun, father-god of justice and the lord of the deep sea. Ogun, god of war and patron of male children. Ohunmila, god of wise counsel and divination. Isango, the angry god of the lightning skies. Eziza, lord of the trading winds. Esu, trickster, afflicter, and god of vengeance. I kneel before you, a broken forsaken deity. I swear to you this day. I pay for my foolishness. I ask for nothing. I ask to die. Death to the five of us. One must live to bury the dead. Death to Ogie, a living symbol of tyranny. Death to Uvbi, the shameless. Death to my twin sons; sad reminders of the calumny and pain of betrayal. Both are products of a monstrous blissful passion. Death to them, and I will gladly take my life. But he must live. Azagidi must live to bury father-in-law, concubine, sons and wife. And he shall forever roam, a destitute. With none to care for him, and none to pity him. He must live forever! (*Her speech reaches a crashing crescendo. Thunders clap lightning flashes, and the earth rumbles. All is calm*). (Agbonifo-Obaseki 38)

The logic that presents itself here for analysis is that Igbaghon is a water goddess who has been betrayed and such infidelity for her is an invitation for death. Her characterization is similar to that of the characterization of the Yeye in *Mojagbe*. Here, they set the machinery that leads to the death of the character, Mojagbe. Like Igbaghon, they cursed and called for the death of Mojagbe, one who has destroyed everything, both human and the more-than-human world. Yerima's Mojagbe is an eponymous play that centres on the dictatorial rule of Oba Aderemi Mojagbe who unleashes terror on those who made him. He is divinely blessed with virtually everything. However, he is blindfolded by his egomania to the extent that he kicks against God. Mojagbe employs the instrumentality of death to suppress all his supposed enemies, including higher authority whom that he is not supposed to treat contemptuously. Meanwhile, the king who kills humans as though they are chickens is reduced to a weakling when confronted by Iku (Death). In the play, Yerima employs death as a check on the excesses of the authoritarian ruling class that often tries to play God.



**Plate 5: Scenic picture of the Yeye in the production of Mojagbe:
Source: A.B.U Studio Theatre**

In the above scene, one can see the interaction between humans and plant life. In the scene, just like Igbaghon's lamentation, the Yeye invokes Layewu, the masquerade of death to dance with Mojagbe. Such dance means death within the cosmic world of the play. As a king, Mojagbe believes so much in the title 'ka bi o si' which means "no one can challenge your authority." In other words, Mojagbe does not want to be questioned or advised. Thus, he often threatens his people with death and punishment. According to Yeye "The air here has gone suddenly foul and a mad king sits on his stench. Away! We must prepare the land for a new one. (Yerima 38). "Air" here symbolizes the environment. Human actions make the ambience foul. The decision of the women to prepare for the coronation of another king symbolizes the outright denunciation of bad leadership that destroys both man and the environment. The inability to steward the environment by Mojagbe and Azagidi breed death. Hence, Igbaghon and the Yeye call for the destruction of the human world which has no regard for more-than-human embodiment. These two female characters must be perceived from the binoculars of more-than-human life as well as their attending forces.

Conclusion

Having argued that there is an intersection between theatre and the environment, this paper explored the concept of environmental theatre and its implications on directing on the Nigerian theatre stage. Nigerian theatre directors are incorporating principles of ecology into their work to promote ecological awareness and advocate for positive change. Using the theory of eco-theatricality, I contend that the theatre is an influential platform for disseminating environmental messages and fostering eco-consciousness among audiences. The director is a central figure in shaping the environmental

aesthetics and messages within a theatrical production given his/her role in working collaboratively with actors, designers, and other theatre practitioners to develop narratives that address environmental concerns and promote sustainable production practices, such as sustainable set designs, responsible material usage, and energy-efficient technologies. This paper concludes that by leveraging the power of theatre as a transformative medium, Nigerian directors can inspire audiences to reevaluate their relationship with the environment and foster a collective sense of responsibility towards sustainable practice.

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