

ROLE INTERPRETATION TECHNIQUES AND THE NIGERIAN ACTOR:
PETER FATOMILOLA IN FOCUS

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TMA/11/0093

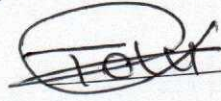
A PROJECT WORK SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE AND
MEDIA ARTS, FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES, FEDERAL
UNIVERSITY, OYE EKITI IN PARTIAL FULFILMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF
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2015

ATTESTATION

I, ALOMI TOLULOPE AYOBAMI hereby attest that this research report is carried out by me and that I am solely responsible for all errors and omissions, if any.

ALOMI TOLULOPE AYOBAMI

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alomi Tolulope Ayobami', is written over a horizontal line. The signature is somewhat stylized and partially obscured by a circular scribble.

SIGNATURE AND DATE


CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this research work was carried out by ALOMI TOLULOPE AYOBAMI with the matriculation number (TMA/11/0093) in the Department of Theatre and Media Arts, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Federal University, Oye-Ekiti, under the guidance of the following:

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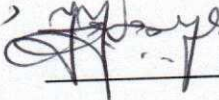
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DEDICATION

This research work is dedicated to God almighty, my case study Dr Peter Fatomilola and everybody that contributed to the progress of this study. God bless you All.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

All thanks to God Almighty for his protection over me during the course of this research work. For being my watch guard when I travelled to Ile-Ife to interview the legendary Peter Fatomilola. It has not being easy but all thanks to God almighty.

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Lastly, I am not forgetting my classmates' Temitope, Babatunde, other member of the class, and my fellow Thespians in general. May the almighty God in his infinite mercy bless you all. Amen

ABSTRACT

The problem of poor acting has bedeviled the quality of production content of the Nigerian movie industry, and too many ambitious Nigerians jump into acting without understanding the demands. This project which focused on the acting technique of a successful Nigerian actor is a qualitative study shall employ the interview methodology to investigate the techniques of the actor under study. The research deduce that there is the need for all talented actors to be exposed to trainings and capacity development programs that will refine their raw talent. Among other things the researcher recommends that Nigerian actors should endeavor to re-event their techniques by being innovative enough and offer fresh innovations to the acting profession.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

The definition of Art as a 'skills in performance, which may be acquired by experience, study or observation' (Dean and Cara, 3), is applicable to the idea of acting as a performing art. Whereas, Whiting has described Acting as 'the most glamorous and fascinating art of the theatre' (185), this is also very valid because the actor is the workforce of the theatre that is readily recognized by the audience and by members of the society. Hence, the Actor is the image maker of the theatre, there is the need to develop and improve his capacity, so as to maximize his impart on the society.

This study seeks to examine and analyze the acting techniques and approaches of an outstanding Nigerian actor. For the purpose of providing a document that can improve the quality of acting in the Nations performing Art industry.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Statistics reveals that the Nigerian video film industry popularly known as "Nollywood", is the world's 3rd largest producer of films (Wikipedia, 2015). However this achievement has been described in terms of quantity, the quality of "Nollywood" films with regards to technical input and acting has remained considerably poor. Among other factors, this owns to the problem of incompetence and inadequacy of untrained, but ambitious individuals who present themselves as Actors. The researcher sets to use this study to solve the problem of incompetence among some Nigerian actors in the interest of improving the overall quality of performances by examining the techniques of a successful actor.

1.3 Aim and objectives of the Study

This researcher aims at improving the capacity of the Nigerian actor by documenting the acting techniques and style of a role model and successful Nigerian actor. The objectives of the study shall include, but not be limited to the following.

- 1) To review the history and development of acting.
- 2) To survey the Nigerian acting profession on stage and on screen.
- 3) To analyze the acting style and techniques for role interpretation.
- 4) To identify the problems and challenges of the Nigerian actor.
- 5) To suggest plausible means for improving the skills of the Nigerian actor

1.4 Significance of the Study

The significance of this study also lies in its purpose for improving the quality of acting on the Nigerian Actor so as to increase patronage for the industry, and ensure a better impart on the society. By this the Acting profession for stage and screen will grow in leaps and bounds. Moreover, the strong influence of western education in the Nigerian performing art, including acting, makes it difficult to account for technical innovations derived from the Nigerian experience. This research, which will document the acting techniques of a successful Nigerian actor, with regards to role interpretation, shall serve as a resource material for actors in the Nigerian industry, and also for scholars on research, in the field of acting.

1.5 Scope and limitation of the Study

There are a whole lot of fantastic actors, performing on the different medium in the industry actors, but this research shall focus a successful Nigerian Actor- Peter Fatomilola, who is a model and legendary actor in the Yoruba regional video film industry. The scope of

the study shall be limited to the techniques for role interpretation deployed by the actor under study. Peter Fatomilola has starred and featured in numerous films, but this study shall limit its investigation to two (2) select films; *Asiri Aye* (2015) and *Oparun* (2015).

1.6 **Research Methodology**

This research depends largely on literary fact and its primary source shall be from the performances of the actor under study and interviews with the actor, while the secondary sources shall include textbooks, journals, encyclopedia, library archival, and internet resources etc. The study shall adopt Modern Language Association (MLA) style of documentation, and the research methodology shall be mainly based on the interview method.

1.7 **Theoretical Framework**

This research is anchored on the two chore performance theories of acting namely Presentationalism and Representationalism. The Presentationalism theory represent a non-realistic kind of acting where in the performance content is presented to the audience (spectator), while the Representationalism describes a realistic kind of acting that represent the illusion of life experience before the audience (spectator).

1.8 **Definition of Terms**

Terms and phrases, which will serve as pivot for this study have been defined accordingly. They shall include the following: Acting, Role Interpretation, Techniques, Documentation, and Approaches.

1.8.1 **Acting:** This term refers to the “imitation” of an action and character by a performer (actor) for the audience’s view, be it on stage or for screen medium.

1.8.2 **Role interpretation:** This phrase describes the primary duty of an actor in relation to a performance script. It is the fulfillment of this task, by an actor, alongside with other performers that give life to the script.

1.8.3 **Techniques:** This refers to the manner and approach with which an actor's skill is manipulated to achieve a desired result.

1.8.4 **Documentation:** This explains the process of generating and providing valuable information, recorded in a manner and order that it can be used for reference purposes.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Acting, as an art, is the most popular aspect of the theatre. While Whiting describes acting as “the most fascinating, glamorous, controversial and confusing of all the arts and crafts that make up the theatre” (184), Pickering states that it is “the most highly visible and best-known aspect of theatre” (189), and the society, from which the theatre audience is composed, thinks of the theatre only in terms of the actor/actress. This is true because, throughout the span of a performance, the performers (actors and actresses) are the objects of presentation that are visible to the audience. Thus without understanding the demands on the performer, most members of the audience assume wrongly that acting is as easy as it appears on stage.

Conversely, Wilson’s states that “Acting is a difficult and demanding profession, and despite its glamour, it calls for arduous training and preparation” (112). In the same vein, Bennett prescribes that great acting involves a “free flow of emotions and impulses expressed in body and voice; an understanding of how to create life-and-death, moment-to-moment acting; a vivid imagination and a body and voice capable of telling all kind of stories” (1)

It is important to note that acting offers a subjective appeal to the audience and as it does to critiques. In this light, Whiting states that “Acting is great if only it produces a great effect on a given audience” (184), hence a set of audience may perceive a particular acting style differently, what another will find adorable. However, the audience is not a fixed phenomenon for judging great acting. This chapter aims at surveying the history and development of acting, the acting styles and techniques, actors and the society and to examine the emergence of the acting profession on stage and for screen in Nigeria.

an English Actor-Manager whose company presented well-rehearsed productions, and became the first actor to be knighted in 1895. (Whiting, 124)

In France, Molière was a great name to reckon with in the art of Acting and one of his young actors, Michel Baron (1653-1729), advanced the natural style of acting. This greatly influenced many others such as actress Adrienne Lecouvreur (1692-1730) who was notable for her invention of “speaking to the heart and showing feeling and truth” (Whiting 128). So also, the era brought about the emergence of Beniot Constant Coquelin (1841-1909), who, according to Whiting was famous for his “logic and mental control.” He adduced that Coqueline “established what Stanislavsky refers to as the representational school of acting, which advocated creative imagination, study and emotion during rehearsals; insisting on complete objectivity” (Whiting, 128).

In Italy also, an actress Eleonora Duse (1859-1924) developed an acting style of “living the part”. This, according to Whiting, achieved realistic acting through her simplicity and sincerity to character, and set high standards for other actors meet in the art of acting (130). Tommaso Salvini (1829-1916), a close observer of Duse also achieved a memorable acting success, similar to hers- “he also sought to live the part, even up to remaining completely in character until the performance was concluded (Whiting, 130). History has it that it was from watching Salvini that Stanislavski was inspired towards the great works he achieved at the Moscow Arts Theatre, and the “Stanislavski’s System” of acting. In the nineteenth century, acting in America advanced appreciably and produced many well-groomed actors, amongst who were Edwin Forrest, Edwin Booth and Joseph Jefferson, who all rose to fame through their realistic acting style. Concerning the American Theatre, Wilson attests thus;

From the end of the nineteenth century to the present day, many plays have been written in a very realistic, lifelike, style. The

characters in these plays reassemble ordinary people in their dialogue, behaviour... presenting them requires that performers make the characters they portray believable and convincing (130).

The twentieth century enjoyed the result of the gradual and diversified development of acting styles and techniques, thus, that age produced a great number of professional actors world over, This progress spanned into the twenty-first century, a century in which the art of acting has grown in leaps and bounds through academics and media advancement. This development had engendered different school of thoughts, theories and innovations by exponents of acting.

2.3 ACTING THEORIES

2.3.1 Presentationalism

This refers to the kind of acting which Cohen describes has 'technical' or 'external' acting. States that this theory in use "the actor learns to 'present' a role through a program of training that customarily originates externally" (356). He does not implore the use of emotion or some degree of illusion of reality to present a performance to the audience rather it drills the actor in a curricula of trainings.

Such actor training may cover technical skills in dramatic phrasing (Learning to analyse and effectively accent metrical verse), vocal Vocal projection (developing a multi-octave speaking range and Sonorous resonance, and the ability to vocally project to large Audiences), stage movement (learning and practising period Dances and various styles of physical combat) (357).

This theory informed the style that was pre-dominant in the classical theatre. Even in contemporary terms Vsevolod Meyerhold the commander of the "comrades of the new drama" also make use of the presentational approach.

2.3.2 Representationalism

The representational theory of acting relates to an internal style of acting which involves the emotion and imaginative capacity of the actor. Cohen describes that the actor that uses this theory needs to study their role and honestly and effectively live the life of the character within the plays situation (357). This can be achieved when the actor feels the emotions of the character portrayed and exhibit same during performance. Cohen posits that this theory demands that an actor should represent the emotion all, physical, and intellectual aspects of the character they seek to portray (357). A modern example of an actor, director and theorist who explore this theory is the Russian actor-director Constantin Stanislavski who innovated an acting techniques known as the system (the method).

2.4 ACTING TECHNIQUES

Through the ages and eras of the history of acting, acting styles and techniques also evolved. According to Duruaku "a technique is truly personal, hence, every actor executes his notion or movement in such a way as to achieve a certain degree of distinctiveness" (47). It is in this vein also that Whiting argues that in acting, the creative approach is not enough, and because acting is not real life, there are obvious differences in interpretation and these differences are elements that constitute the techniques of acting (207-208).

Cohen states that the approaches of acting can be classified as presentational and representational. He explains that with the presentational acting approach, the actor seeks to present a role through a programme of trainings and skills that originates externally, while the representational approach demands that the actor performance should emanate from within, with a profound sense of imagination (356). Whereas the presentational acting approach relies on the use of vocal skills, the ability to imitate and the display of a variety of associated talents, the representational acting approach calls for the actor to live the life of the character

by representing all aspects; emotional, physical and intellectual, of the character portrayed. The presentational approach to acting is an age long practice from the era of classism, which is still applicable in present day. On the other hand, the representational approach to acting is a modern day innovation in acting. Prominent amongst the proponents of modern day innovation of techniques and styles are Constantin Stanislavski, Vsevolod Meyerhold, Bertolt Brecht, Jerzy Grotowski and Peter Brooks.

2.3.1 **Constantine Stanislavski- (1863-1938)**

He is a Russian actor/director who developed the techniques for realistic acting. Stanislavski established a technique for setting the actor's creative and imaginative faculties to work. Wilson notes thus, "his system is based on the assumption that if the actor is sensitive to the stimulus of an imaginary situation, his reactions will definitely take care of themselves and this will result in a certain degree of reality in acting" (120). The Stanislavski's system of acting is also being referred to as "The Method", which stresses the importance of training the actor's voice and body, concentration, observation, specifics, inner truth goal and objectives, super objectives, ensemble playing and psychological action. Regarded as the master of "Psychological realism", Stanislavsky believes that the mind and the body represent a psychological continuum. He rejects the western conception that divides the human mind from the body, and agreeing with the French psychologist, Theodule Ribot, who states that "a disembodied emotion is a non-existent one" (Qtd in Carnicke, 16).

Stanislavski insists that "in every physical action there is something psychological, and in the psychological, something physical" (Qtd in Carnicke, 16-17). For him, the mental is imbued within the physical and vice versa, and with this assumption, he posits that physical tension is creativity's greatest enemy because it "distorts and paralyses the beauty of the body and as well interferes with the minds ability to concentrate and fantasies (Carnicke, 17). Carnicke states that Stanislavsky's advocacy is reminiscent of Leo Tostoy's idea of art

christened “experiencing”, which explains that the art should communicate experience and not just knowledge (17). Acting can only make such impact of the audience when the performer lives the role. Nothing has so much influence the art of acting like Stanislavski System- “The Method”, which thoroughly captures all that an actor needs to live a role. Wilson states that;

Perhaps no other acting technique attracted as many exponents as the method. Lee Strasberg and his group theatre colleagues such as Stella Adler, Robert Lewis and Sanford Meisner (20th century) defended the method, though each of them took slightly different approaches (121).

However, contemporary “Method acting” exponents often adapt a synthesis of the system as it has been established that it interfered with the actor’s personal life or tended to do so. It is for this major pit fall of the ‘Method’ that contemporary actors sometimes consult with psychologists or use imaginative tools to remove emotional block. Hence “modern techniques have been developed to prevent the world of the performance from spilling over into an actor’s personal life in destructive ways” (Wilson, 124). Prior Stanislavsky’s acting innovations; the dominant acting style was artificial form. Thus, he discovered that the best conditions for the creative state of mind include; Freedom and Relaxation of the Body, Magic If, Emotional memory etc (Lawal, 37).

2.4.1.1 **Freedom and Relation of the Body and the Mind**

This demands that the body and mind of the actor be relaxed regularly and free from tension, because tension from either part (body/mind) can interfere with the actor’s “inner mind” particularly, as he attempts to express the inner feelings.

2.4.1.2 **“Magic If”**

This demands that the actor will put his imagination to work by exploring his mind about the true trait of the character, and assume that state for role interpretation. When an actor must be creative (imagination of traits) and flexible enough (assumption of traits) to transfer his mind to that of the character, he is said to explore the “magic-if” technique.

2.4.1.3 **Emotional Memory**

The human system captures every experience through the five sense organs, and these are great resources which Actors can draw from. The use of emotional memory lies in the ability of an actor’s mind to recall to the surface of the consciousness by his five senses, when needed for role interpretation. In such situation, the actor thereby recalls an incident that happened in real life either to him or to another person to interpret his role.

2.4.2 **Vsevolod Meyerhold (1874-1940).**

Meyerhold was one of Stanislavski’s most brilliant students, and he was also from Russian. Later in life he became dissatisfied by the quietness and naturalistic restraints of the Moscow Art Theatre, and broke away to express art in his own way. Bocket explains that he saw acting beyond mere imitation of life but as something greater and more expressive than life itself. He “did away with pretence and expressed everything theatrically” (Brocket, 204). His actors spoke directly to the audience and no attempt was made to conceal the source of light or the fittings that supported the paraphernalia on which his actors performed. He criticised Stanislavski’s system as one that is insufficient of “Physical expressivity”. Thus, he explored the elements from Commedia, Pantomime, Circus, Kabuki, Noh, Boxing and gymnastic to help train the actor’s body to respond further (Barton, 149). Actions on stage were more of acrobatics than the usual traditional acting. Brocket notes thus “his was best described as biomechanics. Perhaps this was to underscore the industrial revolution of his

time. His style was revolutionary in nature, as he makes the actor's to achieve the efficiency and dynamics of a machine or robot" (205).

The achievement of an intense theatrical effect during a theatre production is what Meyerhold refers to as "Theatricalism". His core innovations include Constructivism and Biomechanics which allude to an external development or emotions with arousal of feelings from outside. His idea narrows to creating feelings in the audience than within the actor, and for Meyerhold, "emotions are not necessarily felt but shown in performance" (Barton, 151). The idea of "biomechanics" and "constructivism" anticipate "theatricalism", which entails the elimination of stage convention such as the "forth wall". The cumulative effect of this was the rejection of the idea of theatre as illusion.

2.4.2.1 **Biomechanics**

This concept explains that Actors are to be trained to be as efficient as a machine, so that they can do all the director want them to do. This system reduces an actor to a super puppet to be used by the director.

2.3.2.3 **Constructivism**

Constructivism is the striping of the stage to the barebones. It involves the elimination of detail scenery, and above all in the willing co-operation of the audience in building up an imaginary picture of the stage.

2.4.3 **Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956)**

Brecht was a German medical practitioner who later became a theatre artists, and according to Pickering "critics have describes his acting style as acting in quotation marks" (180). He further explains that Brecht holds a view that the actor should not impersonate but narrate the actions of another person as if quoting facial gesture and movement. His position is that neither the audience nor the actor should be made to identify emotionally with the

After one year CFU was changed to FFU - Federal Film Unit and N.F. Spur was the film exhibition Officer-in-Charge while other indigenous personnel, who had returned from training, formed the nucleus staff. Uge notes that the objective of FFU includes the following:

- The production of new reels and documentaries for public cinema and the television station in Nigeria, which were to publicize the activities and objectives of the Federal Government and to educate the populace on methods of improving its standards of living.
- The national and international exhibition of our cultural achievements and disseminating national and international news events to the public (25).

The FFU was said to have four branches; one in each regional capital and Lagos. In 1954 a marketing based publicity film unit was merged with FFU for the purposes of producing only documentaries and news reels. Therein, the following documentaries produced: *Empire Day Celebration in Nigeria* (1948), *Port Harcourt Municipal Election* (1950) and *Queen Elizabeth II* (1956). Upon Nigeria's independence, the colonial film structure fizzled out and documentary films became produced by the film unit of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Embassies and High Commissions and the British council. Eventually in 1979, a decree was promulgated for the establishment of the Nigeria Film Corporation (NFC) which invariably came to a factual existence after the enabling Act in 1982. Among other things, the Nigerian Film Corporation was concerned with all aspects of production, distribution and exhibition of government's documentary films, and in 1988 NFC produced a number of documentary films; these include *The Choice is Ours* (1988), *Abuja: The Making of A Capital* (1988), *Labour Creates wealth* (1988), *The Gains of SAP* (1988), *Better Life For Rural Women; The Story So Far* (1988).

Shaka explains that the first generation indigenous film-makers trained by CFU were essentially trained in the making of documentary; hence he remarks states that "Adamu Huliu was distinguished as the first to venture into the production of feature films in 1970". (13) He notes, however, that full-length feature films did not really become a regular production by indigenous film-makers until the return from training of the second generation film-makers; some trained in France and others in North America. Categorically, he list name likes of 'Ola Balogun', 'Eddy Ugbomah', 'Sanya Dosumu', and 'Jab Adu' among others as the second generation film-makers; Nigerians who became the movers of the film industry.

Thus Shaka state that "in Nigerian film history, the year 1975 is significant because it was in that year that truly indigenous full-length feature films began to emerge" (12). Prominent works in that year includes Ola Balogun's *Amadi* (1975) and Sanya Dosumu's *Dinner with the Devil* (1975), both produced by indigenous film companies. He adduced also that Ola Balogun, was instrumental to the reorientation and smooth transition of members of the Yoruba Traveling Theatre companies from stage theatrical performances, to screen productions and this became a very significant contribution to the development of film in Nigeria. Thereupon, the Nigeria screens began to feature regularly, films directed and produced by Nigerians, and history has it that the film industry hit a "bumper harvest" in the period of a decade (1975-1985), even though the travail of that epoch was largely the involvement of entrepreneurs who had little or no sponsorship from the state and other agencies. In this span of time, indigenous film makers produced over fifty (50) films at the rate about four (4) films per year, and all were well received by the Nigerian audience.

Unfortunately the economic melt-down, occasioned by the then military government's policy, hits this growing industry and wreak havoc on its development. According to Shaka, "since Nigeria is not an industrialized country, the independent film makers had to contend

with the problems of purchasing foreign currencies, hire essential technical crew, process and edit their films. ...the devaluation of Naira which followed the introduction of SAP made this impossible" (14).

The introduction of Structural Adjustment programme (SAP) in 1985 by the government of the President Ibrahim Babangida impeded the effort made by independent film-makers and thus affected film production in Nigeria. Thus Uge's remark that "the several reasons responsible for the ascendancy of film production in Nigeria then, includes: political instability, economic depression, the high cost of producing on celluloid (46).

Consequently, the television had taken foothold as a prime medium of family entertainment. Television drama series such as *The Masquerade* and *Village Headmaster* were already household names and the attendance in cinema and theatre began to drop. This development, coupled with the high cost of film production sent most movie producers to redundancy. As such, film production in Nigeria since 1985 became a "sporadic" and an "occasional" phenomenon, and consequently the video film industry gradually emerged in a bid to salvage screen entertainment. In Eastern and Western part of Nigeria, at Onitcha and in Lagos particularly, frantic efforts were made to experiment the making of movies with video cameras. This adventure indeed became the foundation of the Nigerian video film industry. Thus, Shaka notes; "in 1980s, Solomon Eze (an Igbo producer) shot some scenario and short stories on camcorders, and transferred them to VHS tapes" (16). Shaka also noted that the experiment of Babatubde Adelusi's photo play magazines in Lagos, an artistic work that inspired a pioneer video film maker, Ade Ajiboye to produce *Sonso Meji* (1988), which is generally regarded as the first video film in Nigeria. He state thus

The screening of *Sonso Meji* at the Tinuade cinema encouraged more producers to venture into video film production and the

commercial success of this adventure came with the involvement of Kenneth Nnebue, through his Neck Video Link (17).

The Nnebue film was directed by Chika Onu, entitled *Living in Bondage* (1988) and it became a very popular video film production. According to Shaka, the commercial success of this film attracted both professionals and non-professionals into the emergent video film industry; in terms of sponsorship, target audience, and mode of distribution/marketing.

2.6 **ACTING ON STAGE AND FOR SCREEN**

The basic acting techniques and principles apply to both medium of acting (stage and screen), but there are also differences that the actor ought to know when performing on either medium. Barton here in offers the six (6) distinct differences between acting on stage and for screen. They are as follow:

2.6.1 **Repetition**

A key contrast between acting for camera and stage is one of repetitive factor that the screen demands. Aside from rehearsals, the stage actor does not go back or repeat a previous action, while performing because the audience is watching the action live. Thus, even when the stage actor makes mistake, it is required that he moves on. Whereas, a screen actor on the film location must take and retake his actions over and again, because there are numerous views (shots) to a single action, and the repeat action must be the same in the filming process (Barton, 208).

2.6.2 **Size**

This refers to the magnification in acting. The stage actors is required to magnify (exaggerate) his action, speech, movement, facial reaction on stage, so as to enhance verbal communication, but all these are not required in any way from the screen actor. For the screen, the camera is very sensitive, thus it captures all actions, gestures and sound that are

larger than life as exaggerations, which is not acceptable on screen. So, it becomes necessary that a stage actor will moderate the "size" of his actions, speech, gestures and facial reactions to suit the screen medium. The screen medium demands natural and real acting (Barton, 209).

2.6.3 **Control**

The film medium gives room for a lot of control, and as such the error margin is minimized. Hence there is the opportunity for repetition, to fulfill the need to complete shots, the same chance can be used to correct error when actions are wrong or not consistent, when lines are wrong, or to control anything in the filming process. That is why it is common, that most screen actors do not take in their lines like stage actors do. They simply read thoroughly to understand the situation, and take the lines in bit as the filming commences (Barton, 210).

2.6.4 **Cheating**

In stage acting, an actor must cheat when required, to a position that favours the audiences' view, without neglecting the other performers on stage. Barton explains it as to assume a "body position that is half way between facing the audience and the partner on stage" (210). However, many people think of film behavior as entirely natural and life like, but it does have its own convention for cheating and in a different form, from that of stage. On screen, cheating has to do with the adjustment of eye position, and to slow down of the rapidness with which an action is taken. It also could come in the request of maintain an unusually close proximity to an object of partner in location, because the camera magnifies space.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DATA AND ANALYSIS

3.1 A BRIEF ON PETER FATOMILOLA

Peter Oladele Fatomilola was born January 16, 1946 at Ido-Osi, Ekiti State. His father was a traditional Priest and he was often allowed to observe his father when he hosts other priests in weekly meetings called "Ose Awo"; an event that occasions a lot of singing, drumming, dancing and other Priestly communion. Meanwhile his mother was a devote Christian of the Apostolic church. Fatomilola attended The Apostolic Primary School in 1962, The Apostolic Secondary Modern School in 1966 both in Ido-Osi. He started his acting career in the year 1967. He attended Ife City College in 1971 and ran a diploma programme at the Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU) in 1971. He has featured and starred in numerous films. He is happily married with children.

3.2 ACTING EXPLOIT OF PETER FATOMILOLA

Fatomilola's early exposure into acting dates back to his Primary school days. During end of the year activities he would always perform in stage plays. While in secondary school, he won several awards in acting and script writing, and it was during one of those competitions that late professor Ola Rotimi spotted him and employed him as actor in Ori Olokun (OAU) 1967. Fatomilola started his stage acting with the play 'Rere Run' where he acted as "Lawuwo" the Labor leader, and also in *The gods are not to Blame* where he acted as *Alaka*. Since then, Fatomilola states that has acted in "non-less than 100 stage plays and 100 screenplays", and winning countless meritorious awards. He acted as the first *Papa Ajasco* in wale Adenuga's Production's *Papa Ajasco*. However, because of his fantastic interpretation of the role of Ifa Priest, which is traceable to his background, he had acted as Ife Priest than any other Nigerian actor and presently he is the (head of traditional priests) in Ido-Osi.

His father pre-occupation as a Priest and host of the “*ose awo*” greatly stirred his acting instinct. He enjoys observing the “*ose awo*” because he loves the way they sing, dance, drum chants, and it influenced his spontaneity for performing drama. Fatomilola’s amateurish effort was discovered as great potentials by Late Professor Ola Rotimi, who was chairman in a secondary school occasion where student’s drama performance took place. Ola Rotimi invited him to *Ori Olokun Theatre*, of the Obafemi Awolowo University. There he had more opportunities and exposure to performances and dramatic art which helped him develop his artistic powers. After a decade in *Ori Olokun Theatre*, Ola Rotimi was replaced by Prof Wole Soyinka who took charge of *Ori-Olokun Theatre* for another decade. Fatomilola’s experiences with these great theatre icons shaped him for great exploits in Acting.

3.3 ANALYSIS OF *ASIRI AYE* AND *OPARUN*

3.3.1 *Asiri Aye* (2015)

Asiri Aye, as written by Tosin Fagbemi, was directed by Saheed Jelili, and stars Peter Fatomilola as one of the lead actors (*Baba Ayejin*). The Movie centers on Adeagbo, a young undergraduate student who is studying Yoruba language in a tertiary institution. He wishes to conduct his B.A research Project on *Asiri Aye* (the secrets responsible for the world), and in spite the discouragements from all and sundry he persists, and goes on with the investigation when the topic was approved.

Adeagbo, then visits a Herbalist that introduces him to *Baba Ayejin* at *Abule Ayedake*. He embarks on the journey (from Abeokuta to Ile-Ife) with his friend *Deji*, to see *Baba Ayejin*. Upon consultation with *Baba Ayejin*, *Adeagbo* exhibits stubbornness while administering a prescribed process, but he is hit by dire consequences. He returns to *Baba Ayejin* who administers healing on him and eventually enables him to see the “secrets”, as supernatural beings that are responsible for the world. He sees *Esu* (devil) and *Iku* (death).

Aje (witches) carrying on their activities. He later becomes frustrated and resolves to change his project research topic.

3.3.2 The character of a traditional priest

In the movie, Peter Fatomilola played the role of a traditional priest at *Abule Ayedake* in Ile-Ife. He is a round (Dynamic) character. He is smart and he is full of tricks. He wants to help *Adeagbo* in his research work but suddenly changes his mind when he plays a trick on the undergraduate student, just to test if he is obedient or not, but he fails the test. *Baba Ayejin* changes his mind back to continue to help him with his work when *Adeagbo* pleads and promise to be obedient, before and they proceed on the research. The movie is very relevant to the Nigeria society because it educates young undergraduates not to be unreasonably inquisitive about matters that are beyond mortal knowledge. It's also teaches obedience, for if *Adeagbo* had listened to his friends, teachers and other people that advised him he would not encounter too much troubles as he did.

3.3.3 *Oparun* (2015)

Oparun, as written by James Muyiwa Jejeloye, and directed by Muka Ray also starred Peter Fatomilola as one of the lead characters. The movie talks about two young men (*Muka* and *Femi*) that are both afflicted by poverty, so much that feeding became a problem. At a point in time one of them, *Muka*, became rich and *Femi* was still poor. They lost touch with each other until one faithful day, *Femi* who is now a cab man, offers taxi service to *Muka's* girlfriend; he drives her to *Muka's* house, unwittingly. They identify each other at the instance, but *Muka* denies him, and pretends not to know him.

One night *Femi* goes out to get fuel at the filling station, and he meets the night guard, (Peter Fatomilola). He tells the night guard the story of his life and he advices him to indulge in "money ritual", which will not cost him a human life. The night watch tells him to get

"*afomo oparun*" he searched everywhere for it but to no avail. Eventually, he finds it when he embarks on a journey to Ife. The next day, the traditional priest gave him something to put in the wardrobe and in the morning, he finds a huge sum of money in his wardrobe, so, he collapses and dies.

In this movie, Peter Fatomilola plays the night guard and also a traditional Priest. He smokes cigarette with *Femi* and he advises him on money ritual, during his first appearance at the Petrol station, where *Femi* speaks to him about his predicaments. *Femi* refuse to but he persuade him to, he tells him to look for "*afomo oparun*" when he knows that it is difficult to come by. When he eventually finds it, the traditional Priest makes incantation to be sure that he brings the prescribed item, but when the money comes, it kills *Femi* as he has not seen that magnitude of money before.

3.3.4 **The character of the Night watchman and Traditional Priest**

In the movie, Peter Fatomilola played the role of a night watchman (at a petrol station) and that of the Traditional Priest. He is a nice and considerate man. His first appearance was when *Femi* comes to plead with him for him to park his car in the petrol station till the next day. He accepts but tells him to stay with the car. So as they fraternize, *Femi* tells him the story of his life, and *Baba Akanbi* out of compassion, advises him to indulge in money ritual, and he reluctantly accepts. *Baba Akanbi* tells him to get some things for rituals, and knows it is a difficult task to get, but he proves that he is desperate by looking for it all the by all means. However, when his wishes come, he did not start to witness it. The movie *Oparun* is very relevant to the society, because it teaches people to be patient, and wait for God's time in the pursuit of wealth because money ritual has its dire consequences.

3.4 **ACTING TECHNIQUES DEPLOYED IN ASIRI AYE AND OPARUN**

Peter Fatomilola exhibits great talent at interpreting the character of *Baba Ayejin* (Ifa Priest) in *Asiri Aye*, and this may not be far from his age-long experience. With body

movement, gestures, facial expression, the use of his voice, chants etc he brings the role to life. According to Fatomilola, he interprets his role by putting himself in the world of the character his playing, putting himself in the situation of the character and using his environment to interpret the role. In essence, Fatomilola employs the "Magic If" for role interpretation.

For him, he does so much with his voice with regards to the demands of the role, chanting, singing and making incantations. He states that his approach, whenever he receives a script he reads his lines and other character's line for understanding. In every instance, he reads the "entire script for at least twenty (20) times so that the lines can stick, before dropping the script. He states that;

I read the script (as many times as possible) it in order to know the reaction to give when other actors are talking and also to know my cues. A bad actor reads only his line but a good actor reads the whole script and understands it (Fatomilola, 2015).

Upon reading the script severally, he examines or determines the age of the character, whether old or young. If the character is that of an old man, he brings down his voice down, talk calmly, softly with less energy, but if it is a young man's role, he injects more energy into it as much as is required. For an old man of 90 years, he'll ask himself, how will a ninety (90) years old man talk, how does he walk, etc. He generates numerous questions about the character, and provides the answers, for him to assume the role, and that explains why his interpretations of the *Ifa Priest* roles are never the same. He corroborates this fact when he asserts that

"I do not use the same interpretation of the roles of *Ifa Priest*. I interpret it in one play the way I did in another one. The people (producer/director) will not use me again, because they will be seeing the same person in all the films I featured in. As an expert, I read the script and give it different interpretations" (Fatomilola, 2015)

Besides using “Magic-If”, Fatomilola also attest that he employs the “Memory Recall”, when he states that “when I was giving the role of an *Ifa Priest* in *Asiri Aye* I used the experience I gained from my father and his colleagues” (Fatomilola, 2015). This categorizes his acting as being realistic in style, as he deploys the Stanislavsky’s core techniques for acting.

CHAPTER FOUR

SUMMARY

4.1 FINDINGS

In the process of this study, the researcher made certain vital findings, which are worthy of note. These findings are hereby explained below:

4.1.1 Training is as important as Talent

Through this study it has been established that the training of an actor is vital to his exploits in the career of Acting. It is not enough for an actor to be talented and skilled at the display of features that make for a great actor. If such "very" talented actor is not subjected to the trainings and discipline of the actor, he may be successful, but may not be able to stand the diverse challenges of the profession. His art may lack conviction and the necessary exposure that training affords. Whereas, with training, the talent of an actor is better refined and sharpened with a style. At such point, the actor performs with the conviction that they are knowledgeable in what they are doing.

4.1.2 Acting Techniques are same for Stage and Screen Performances

The studies also reveal that the acting style and techniques, which an actor employs, can be applied on the stage and on the screen medium. The choice of technique to be used in any of the medium is dependent on the style of the performance. For instance, an actor may decide to use Stanislavsky's "The Method" for a realistic performance on stage, and also use same technique for a realistic film.

4.1.3 Acting for Stage and for Screen demands Adjustment to Screen Media Conventions

As afore mentioned, it is the medium of performance that differ and the difference in both medium (stage and screen) brings about different conventions and approaches to performance. Knowing that the stage is the Theatre media, while the screen is the Film

media, acting on the Film media is very sensitive, and the necessary exaggeration that is obtainable in the theatre cannot be accommodated on screen.

4.2 CHALLENGES

In spite the warm reception and effort of the Actor under study, for offering vital information during the interview session, the researcher observes that certain essential details are not available because the Actor under study hasn't given keen attention to self-documentation. For instance, the Actor only gave estimates of number of films and stage play which he had acted in, but cannot say with precision because there is no record to inform that. Also, the researcher anticipated that the Actor will be able to provide, the video recording of one or two stage play, but that was also not available. This is a major challenge, which constrained the researcher to studying the actor with select screen works (films), which are available with vendors.

This study, which sets out to study the technique(s) of a role-model actor, seeks for self-innovation and inventions that can reflect the Nigerian experience/approach to acting. However, throughout the interview and interaction with the Actor, the researcher did not find out any new innovation/invention. The actor under study describes that he applies the "Magic-If"; a step in Stanislavsky's "The Method", for role interpretation.

Also, there is this premonition that the Actor under study is a stuck character, as reflected in his recent works. He has played the *Ifa* Priest Role than any other Actor in Nigeria, and Director/Producers have continued to feature him for that role. Faomilola, explains that he is not a stuck character, it is the casting from producers and directors that will always sticks him to the role of "*Ifa Priest*". However, he said he has played many other roles in films, other than "*Ifa Priest*", which he is famously known for. Finding one of such films where Fatomilola played a different role was a challenge for the researcher, thus the study

examined him on the techniques and dynamism of his interpretation in the select films, where he has played "*Ifa Priest*".

4.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

From the above challenges, the researcher hereby recommends that following:

- 1) Actors should consider the need for self-documentation, and record keeping of their Acting career, which will constitute resources for self-evaluation and to volunteer useful information to the public.
- 2) Nigerian Actor should experiment and be innovative enough to re-invent techniques and approaches to Acting with regards to the Nigerian experience.
- 3) Producers and Directors should make effort to explore the capacity of the Nigerian Actor in multiple roles, others than making stuck characters out of them. It will expose them to other roles and develop their capacity for those roles.

4.3 CONCLUSION.

The Nigerian video film industry has witnessed the sad experiences of death, of our veteran and fantastic actors. Most of these demised actors never had their experiences documented in their life time. Thus they pass away, with their creative talent without earning academic documentation of their approaches and styles. This research is an effort and documenting one of the living legend, who is still active as a role model actor in the industry. This will help preserve his useful contribution to the industry. By so doing, scholars, actors and even generations unborn can access it afterwards to learn and develop tem selves. This study is an effort in that direction. If there is proper documentation of several successful actor's techniques and approaches, for industry hands and scholars to benefit from, it will improve the quality of acting in the industry and ultimately improve the quality of film produced, and boot the Nation's economy.

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW WITH ACTOR UNDER STUDY (CHIEF PETER FATOMILOLA)

Q.1 PERSONAL DATA-

- **Names in full:** I am Chief Peter Oladele Fatomilola
- **Place of origin:** Ido-Osi, ekiti state
- **Motivations and circumstance that informed your acting career (if any):** When I was a small boy my father and his colleagues usually gather in our house every five days like the Christian go to church on Sunday, they call it 'ose awo'. I love staying with them because I love the way they sing, dance, drum, and chants I do not know all they were doing then was performing drama. While I was in primary school, during our end of the year activities we do local plays and the play is always a man having two wives and the jealous one going to an herbalist. So whenever our teacher ask us who will play the role of an herbalist I raise my hands because I like the role that was how it all started. When I was in the secondary school I developed the knowledge I gained from my father and his colleagues. Then different school come together for competition, I won prizes for my school in acting, directing, script writing etc. during the competition the chairman of the occasion who happens to be late Ola Rotimi spotted me during our performance and called me. He said who are you? Who taught you drama? He said he wanted me to do acting. He told me am a material, he said he discovered some potentials in me. I followed him and started professionally at the 'Ori Olokun' theatre group in 1967, under the late professor Ola Rotimi at the University of Ife. I worked with him for ten years before Professor Wole Soyinka took over and also trained me for 10year. My experience under the two masters contributed to my success today.

- **Religious background:** My father is a traditional priest and my mother is a Christian she attends the apostolic church. So if you call me an Ifa priest I am and if you call me a Christian I am.

Q.2 EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND-

- **Institution(s) of learning as relating to career with year:** I went to the apostolic pry school 1962, the apostolic modern secondary school 1966, Ife city colledge 1971 and diploma in OAU in 1977.
- **Periodic Trainings for Career developments with year(s):** Ori olokun theatre group in 1967.

Q.3 PROFESSIONAL CAREER-(STAGE)

- **First professional work on stage. (Role, where and when)?** : Then we perform many plays at the same time. So my first Performance was *rere run* (I played lawuwo the labor leader) and *the gods are not to blame* (I played the role of alaka) 1973 in ife.

- **Estimate the number of works you have acted in on stage:**
Ans; I cannot really remember because I have acted in so many stage plays even till now I still go on stage. But let us say 100.

- **How many stage performances have you had outside the country? (Where and when?)**

I did some works with Ola Rotimi in Ghana, New York and Senegal

- **Awards/Accolades for Stage Works:**
Ans; I cannot give numbers because all my award both screen and stage are together. Except i pack everything out and start separating.

- **In what other art of the theatre does your strength lie?**

Ans; I can direct plays, act, sing in any Yoruba dialect because I know how to manipulate my voice, I chant, I was a costumier for many years I pick costume for productions and for a large industry.

- **Any other useful information regarding your stage work-**

Ans; The information I have for actor's is that they should always marry their script, I know how to marry my script. You give me a script I read through, I know what the story is saying. While on stage you have to be disciplined, Project and concentrate. When on stage you need to communicate to the last person on stage so you need to project.

- **Your approach to interpreting the role-**

Ans; I look for factors, there are factors in acting which are the voice. If am given a character I check the age of the character if he is an old man. I have to bring my voice down, talk gently and softly less energy. But if it a young guy much energy is required. You check age, if am to play a 90 years old man, I will ask myself how do a 90 years old man talk, how does he walk, you question yourself that how do I develop myself.

- **Your Technique to Characterization:**

Ans; I put myself into the world of the character am playing. Remember things that has happened to u or someone before. For example the way my father and his colleagues go their ifa then I observe and use some nw. it's all about experience.

- **Any personal attachment to roles in order to inspires a fantastic interpretation?**

Ans; I read my script well and imagine the role before acting any role.

- **Giving that the basic tool of an actor is the Body and the Voice, which do you explore more on screen.**

Ans; I know how to use the two very well. You know your body talks before you use your voice to pass information before talking. Body before voice. Once the information gets to the

brain gestures (that is body) before voice. If you step on fire your body gesture show it before you voice it. Before sound there must be reaction. They work together but I know how to manipulate the two.

- **Any other useful information regarding your stage works and character interpretation**

Ans; Once am on stage I leave Peter Fatomilola and enter into the world of the character am playing. I forget everything I was thinking about before coming on stage and everybody around till I leave the stage. I concentrate and stay focused.

Q.4 PROFESSIONAL CAREER (SCREEN)-

- **First professional screen performance (Role and when);**

Ans; my first screen play was also *rere run* NTA came down to record it in that 1973.

- **Estimate the number of screen performances so far-**

Ans; when I was still in service 7years ago I use to write it down so as to add it to my cv but later I stopped because I think I don't need that again. So I act and leave. But let's say 100.

- **How many screen works out of the country? (Where and when?);**

Ans; I have not done any work out of the country apart from the one the western people came to do here.

- **How has your theatre background enhanced/impeded your efficiency as a screen performer-?**

Ans; when I got into the filming industry. I used my experience. When some people gets to the screen they have a lot of problem with the production because on screen you don't need to shout like the stage performance. My stage background really helped me, I do just one take and then other shots unlike other people. My directors respect me for that because I don't give them problem at all.

- **Does your involvement in the screen medium affect your indulgence in your first love; stage?:**

Ans; No, till know I still do stage performances. When I have stage performances I go and when am called for screen too I go. So I still do the two.

- **What are your approaches/techniques of code-switching from screen to stage as a performer on both media? More...**

Ans; As an experienced actor I know how to switch from screen to stage. There are things you do on stage that you don't do on screen. On stage you project so that the last person in the theatre can hear you but on screen you don't need to shout because you will have boom mic around. Body gestures should be minimal on screen.

- **It has been observed, sir that most often, if not all the times, of your role have always been that of the 'ifa priest'.**

- i. **Will you fit into the description of a stereotyped actor, giving the ifa priest's role?:**

Ans; Am not, I have movies I didn't act an ifa priest. Yoruba directors and producers wanted to make me a stock actor because am good in the role of an ifa priest. I was the first papa ajasco, I was lawyer cooker in the play lawyer cooker I was a harden criminal, I was alagba peteru in the play *odun baku* a Christian priest that sells years. I buy it from my boys that have more years and they sell it for money. I have that power in the play.

- ii. **Do you have a religious inclination with ifa, traditional worship?**

Ans; Yes, like I said before my father is a traditionalist and I stay with him and his ifa mates.

- iii. **Have you played any other role, either on stage or on screen aside from ifa priest?:**

Ans; yes I have, a lot

iv. **If yes, kindly mention (title, date/year).**

Ans; *Odun baku* (2006), *lawyer cooker* and so on.

v. **Are their significant differences between your approaches for interpreting the ifa role in your different work?**

Ans; Yes there is

vi. **If yes kindly explain.**

Ans; Ifa is a kind of knowledge, it's like bible like Quran the same way we study bible knowledge and Islamic religion in school should be the way we study ifa but the missionary condemned the ifa knowledge because of theirs but now we are trying to let them know that our knowledge is richer and purer. Ifa is not Orisa but knowledge but they camouflaged us that ifa is bad. They we shouldn't do herbs so that their own medicine can sell. I use the same technique, but I know the method of ifa and a method for other characters, don't do the same way cause a way prisoner will talk is different from the way another character will.

• **The performance *Asiri aye* what were your Techniques to Characterization of the ifa priest role.**

Ans; I read the script from the beginning to the end, I got the idea of what the ifa priest in *asiri aye* look like.

The performance *oparun* what was your techniques to characterization?

Ans; I use the same techniques for all my films but different interpretation.

• **How did you do to achieve a significantly distinct role interpretation when you are given the same ifa priest role in difference plays?**

Ans; When I get the script I read your own script go through it. The ifa priest I play will not be the one I will play in other plays. I will change it because if I don't the people using me will not use me again because they are seeing the same person. If this person gives me an ifa

priest and I play the person will see that am super if it's the same it will be boring and people won't call me.

- **Kindly throw light to clear the doubts in Actors who cannot find that thin line between Acting and Possession when you play the Ifa Role.**

Ans; In *odun baku*, where I played *alagba peteru* he was a priest in the church and you know I will want to enter into trance. I will do my own in such a way that am not thoroughly possessed that am acting, when you act you are imitating when you acting or you possessed spirit is different. I act my ifa role since I know am an actor, I limit myself to acting. In addition, in ifa you don't possess in reality, it idol worshippers, sango, ogun that are possessed, egungun that are possessed.

- **What are your techniques for role interpretation as significant in *Asiri Aye* and other films?**

Ans; When am giving a script I check what type of play it is comedy, tragedy etc. If its tragedy I remove myself away from Peter Fatomilola. I develop the character am to play. How do I develop the character, if am playing the part of a madman, I will think of a madman in lagere, Lagere is close to me, I observe the way he looks, the way he opens his mouth and all. When am acting people don't see Peter Fatomilola in me again they see a madman on the street. I go into the world of the character am playing till I finish the production you will not see Peter Fatomilola.

- **What is Approach (Step by step method) to role interpretation when you get a script? (Stage or screen).**

Ans; When I get my script I read it understand the story then memorize it because nobody will prompt you, I will sit down at one corner when I know am good to go I drop my script.

I don't study my own lines alone I study my co actors lines too because if I do not, it will affect me because I will not know when and where not to talk when I study my line and my

partners line even if we are five in that scene I will try to no little of their lines doing that I will not be able to run dry on stage. Bad actors study their own lines alone. After studying my lines I throw my script away dream about the role, imagine the character and reaction to people lines. I don't cram my lines i read my whole script like 20 times then it sinks, I don't memorize line by line. 10 times half of the lines is on my head, but 20 times I don't need the script anymore

- **Are there new innovation to the expression of your acting approach and technique order than what western theatre has passed on us in the book? If yes please state and explain.**

Ans; When am on stage and the audience are clapping or making noise I have my ways of making the audience keep shut I improvise some things and when they are calm I then give the beautiful lines they almost missed. If they are making noise while am reciting my lines, it usually improvisation not my real lines, then they will stop themselves then I will then deliver the beautiful lines they wanted to miss.

- **Have there been any documentation about your acting techniques in the academic before now.**

Ans; Before I retired many student come to me, but this one you doing now is different from theirs. Those ones only wanted to know about Ori Olokun and how drama in OAU started and how I handle the two. But yours is formal.

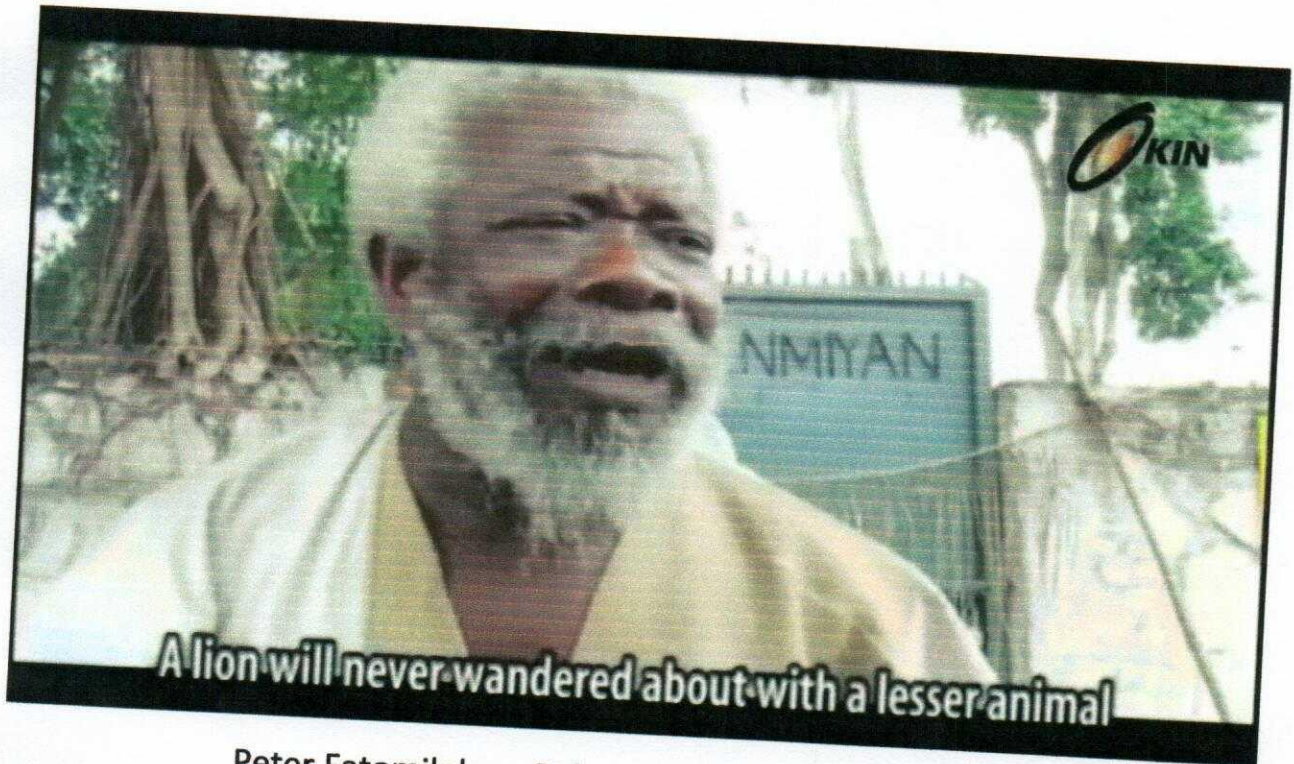
- **How your involvement in the academics was enhance your artistic performance both on stage and screen.**

Ans; My involvement was limited, I do instruct student to do this do that while in rehearsals. My contribution is practical to the academic work. By 4pm then we enter into practical proper. It got to a point the university queried me that I do not stay in school regularly that am always out of school. I told them that as an artist I have to go and acquire more

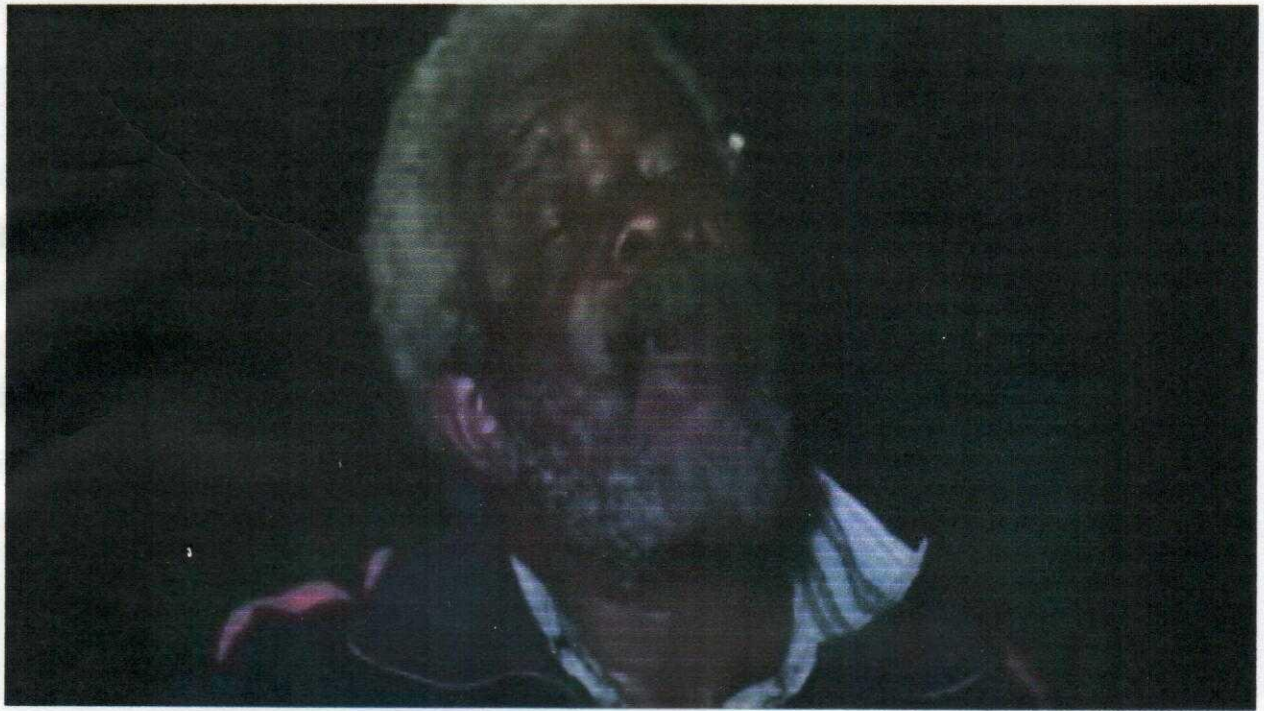
knowledge from outside. I told them we own the department we are part of the people that want the department to progress. I told them since 1967 to 1977 do they want me to be repeating that same knowledge alone I need more experience by so doing I look for ways of tapping experience from other cast, with that I will have some new things to impart to the student. That statement was what I used to win the case that day, the woman that championed the panel was the first to clap for me.



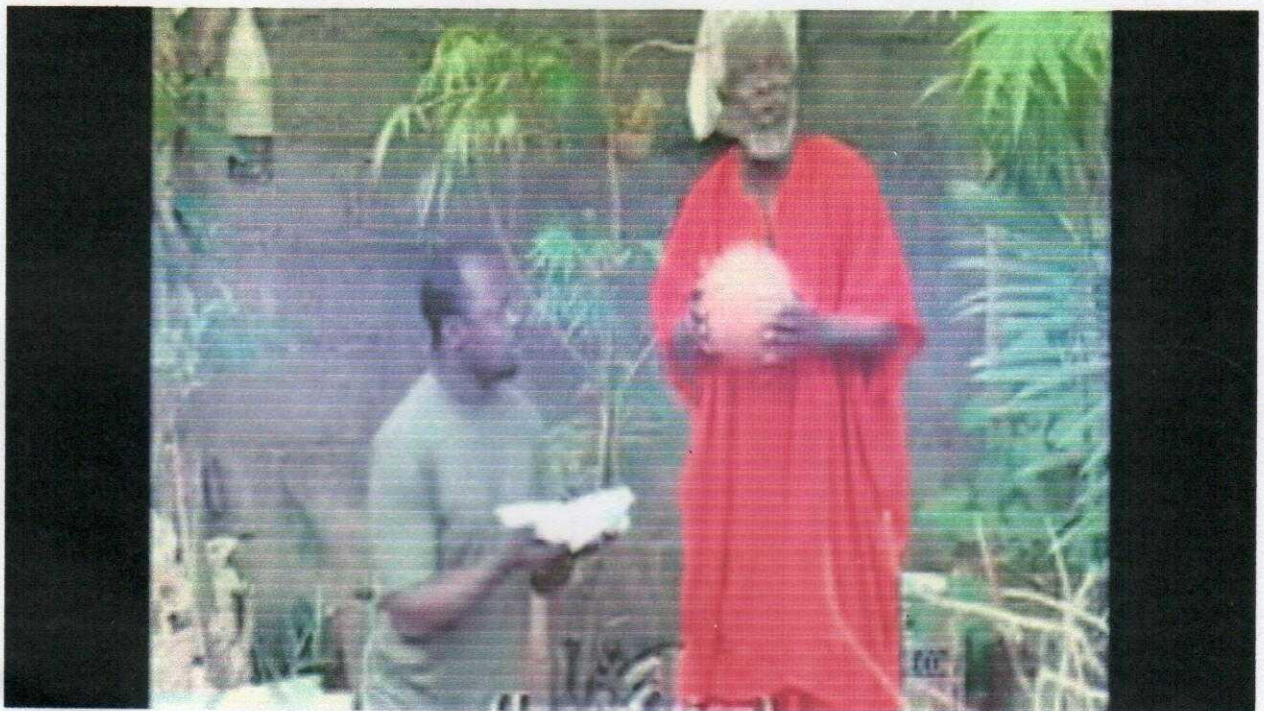
Peter Fatomilola making consultation in Asiri Aye 2015



Peter Fatomilola as Baba Ayejin in Asiri Aye 2015



Peter Fatomilola as Night watchman in oparun 2015



Peter Fatomilola as ifa priest in oparun 2015