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Malleability of Hagher's Plays to Styles in Performance

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This study examines the malleability of Iyorwuese Hagher's plays to varied styles in performance, using *Mulkin Mata*, *Aishatu*, and *Anti-People* as staged at the Department of Theatre Arts, Federal College of Education (Special), Oyo, between 2002 and 2012. The problem addressed is the limited scholarly attention given to the relationship between Hagher's dramaturgy and the interpretive possibilities it offers directors, actors, and designers in performance. Although Hagher's plays have attracted literary attention, insufficient study has been devoted to their pliability in stage realisation. This study addresses that gap. Its aim is to establish how Hagher's dramaturgy permits diverse performance choices, while its objectives are to identify the stylistic features of the selected plays, examine their stage interpretation, and assess their adaptability beyond the stage. The study is anchored in Patrice Pavis's theory of *mise en scène*, which explains performance as the organised transformation of dramatic text into stage expression through acting, design, movement, and visual composition. Adopting a qualitative, practice-based analytical method, the study draws on selected productions and textual evidence. Findings show that Hagher's use of narration, role reversal, audience involvement, satire, episodic structure, and flashback expands directorial and design options. The study concludes that the formal elasticity of these plays strengthens their stage vitality, pedagogic value, and screen adaptability, thereby extending their relevance within theatre practice and performance scholarship.

Keywords: Hagher, malleability, *mise en scène*, performance styles, dramaturgy

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Introduction

Playwriting emerges from lived social experience; however, its artistic distinction is determined by the playwright's control of language, structure, and dramaturgy. Dramatic texts differ not merely in subject matter but in their modes of representation, ranging from direct exposition to satiric and symbolic expression. These differences are realised through character formation, dialogue, and spectacle, including music, dance, setting, and costume, which together constitute the aesthetic identity of a play (Brockett and Ball 59). The dramatic text, therefore, provides a structured yet open framework for theatrical realisation. Notwithstanding the centrality of the written script, a play attains full meaning only in performance. The movement from page to stage requires the collaborative intervention of the director, actors, and designers, whose interpretive decisions determine the acting style, visual composition, and rhythm of the production. As Pavis maintains, *mise en scène* refers to the organisation of all stage elements into a coherent system through which the dramatic text is translated into performance (24). This process affirms that theatrical meaning is produced through arrangement and interpretation rather than mechanical reproduction of the script. Performance, therefore, operates as a site where dramaturgical structures are tested, modified, and made perceptible to an audience.

The variability of performance is further shaped by differing directorial approaches. Some productions adhere closely to the playwright's prescriptions, while others introduce conceptual adjustments or substantial reworking of the text in line with specific artistic objectives. Brockett and Ball identify these approaches as interpretive, adaptive, and concept-driven modes of production (322–23). Meyerhold's position that the director may treat the script as material for creative reconstruction reinforces the view that dramatic texts permit a range of performance possibilities (452). Such positions establish that performance style is not fixed but contingent upon interpretive strategies, production conditions, and audience orientation.

Within this framework, the concept of malleability becomes central to the evaluation of dramatic texts. Malleability refers to the capacity of a play to sustain varied modes of staging without compromising its thematic coherence or structural integrity. Plays that exhibit this quality allow for flexibility in acting conventions, scenographic design, and audience engagement. This capacity is often linked to dramaturgical features such as episodic construction, narrative mediation, symbolic characterisation, and openness in stage directions. Brecht's epic theatre demonstrates this principle through its use of narration, interruption, and separation of theatrical elements, which enable directors to reorganise performance components in diverse ways (Brecht

37). Such dramaturgy does not impose a singular mode of representation; rather, it supports multiple interpretive outcomes.

However, critical engagement with African drama has largely concentrated on thematic and ideological concerns, including politics, gender relations, and cultural representation, with limited attention to performance realisation. This orientation has resulted in insufficient examination of how dramatic texts function within rehearsal and production, particularly in institutional theatre settings where material conditions, training objectives, and audience composition necessitate adaptive staging strategies. A focus on malleability provides a means of addressing this limitation by foregrounding the relationship between dramaturgy and performance practice. The plays of Iyorwuese Hagher offer a suitable basis for such examination. His works, notably *Mulkin Mata*, *Aishatu*, and *Anti-People*, combine social critique with dramaturgical structures that permit varied performance interpretations. These plays employ devices such as episodic progression, narrative intervention, role reversal, and temporal shifts, all of which expand the range of directorial and performance choices available in production. While existing studies have addressed their thematic concerns, particularly in relation to governance, gender, and social justice (Akoh 1–5), limited attention has been given to their adaptability in performance.

This study therefore examines the malleability of Hagher's plays to styles in performance, using selected productions staged at the Department of Theatre Arts, Federal College of Education (Special), Oyo, between 2002 and 2012. The aim is to establish how the dramaturgical structure of these plays supports flexibility in acting, directing, and design. The objectives are to identify key stylistic features within the texts, analyse their interpretation in performance, and assess their implications for theatre practice and adaptation. The study adopts a qualitative analytical method, drawing on performance observation, production documentation, and textual analysis. By situating Hagher's dramaturgy within the framework of *mise en scène* and performance interpretation, this study demonstrates that the adaptability of these plays enhances their relevance in theatre training, production, and potential translation to screen media. It further establishes that the enduring value of a dramatic text lies not only in its thematic concerns but in its capacity to accommodate varied forms of stage realisation.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored in Patrice Pavis's theory of *mise en scène*, which conceives theatrical performance as the organised transformation of dramatic text into stage expression through the

coordinated arrangement of acting, scenography, movement, sound, and visual composition. The term *mise en scène*, originally derived from nineteenth-century French theatre practice, referred to the placement of actors and elements on stage under the direction of the *metteur en scène*. Its conceptual expansion in modern theatre theory, particularly in the twentieth century, repositioned it as a critical framework for analysing how meaning is constructed in performance rather than merely executed (Pavis 24). Patrice Pavis, a French theatre theorist and semiotician, advanced this concept through his engagement with theatre semiotics and intercultural performance studies from the late twentieth century. His formulation draws on earlier contributions by scholars such as Roland Barthes and Keir Elam, who approached theatre as a system of signs, as well as on developments in European directing traditions associated with figures like Stanislavski, Meyerhold, and Brecht, who redefined staging as an interpretive act. Pavis systematises these developments by proposing that performance is constituted through a network of signifying systems—gestural, visual, spatial, and auditory—which are organised in the process of staging to produce meaning for the audience (Pavis 29; Elam 2).

The central postulation of Pavis's theory is that the dramatic text does not determine performance in a fixed manner; rather, it serves as a matrix that is transformed through *mise en scène*. This transformation involves selection, arrangement, and emphasis. Acting translates character and dialogue into embodied action; design elements such as costume, lighting, and set establish visual and symbolic environments; movement and spatial organisation regulate rhythm and focus; and sound structures the auditory dimension of the performance. The interaction of these elements produces a unified theatrical event that may differ across productions of the same text. Consequently, performance is not a duplication of the script but an interpretive reconstruction.

The development of *mise en scène* as a theoretical framework corresponds with shifts in modern theatre from text-centred practice to performance-centred analysis. In contemporary theatre discourse, emphasis is placed on staging as a site of meaning production, where directors and performers exercise creative agency in shaping the theatrical event (Fischer-Lichte 38; McAuley 27). This perspective underscores the variability of performance and the possibility of multiple valid interpretations of a single dramatic text. The applicability of Pavis's theory to this study lies in its capacity to account for the flexibility of dramatic works in performance. The selected plays of Iyorwuese Hagher, *Mulkin Mata*, *Aishatu*, and *Anti-People*, exhibit dramaturgical features that permit varied staging choices, including episodic structure, narrative intervention, and

symbolic representation. Through the lens of *mise en scène*, these features are examined in relation to how directors, actors, and designers organise performance elements to realise the plays on stage.

In anchoring this study, Pavis's framework provides the analytical basis for identifying how dramaturgical structures enable diverse performance styles. It clarifies what constitutes performance transformation, which elements are involved in staging, and how interpretive decisions shape the final theatrical product. The result of this application is the demonstration that Hagher's plays possess structural qualities that support flexibility in acting, directing, and design, thereby enhancing their adaptability within institutional theatre and their potential for translation to other performance media.

Hybridism of Styles in Character Interpretation

Acting styles in performance is grounded in the unity of vision achieved through the convergence of the playwright's dramaturgy and the interpretive contributions of the director, actors, and designers. Although the play originates as a written construct, theatre is realised through rehearsal and performance, where literary intention is translated into embodied action, visual arrangement, and spatial organisation. The designation "playwright" signifies this dual function, as the dramatist composes not only for reading but for staging. Umukoro describes this process as an arduous engagement that combines literary craft with the imaginative work of production (99). Consequently, the playwright functions within the sphere of performance creation, while the director, actors, and designers operate as collaborators who extend and realise the script in practice.

The dramatic text provides the initial framework for performance; however, it does not determine a fixed mode of enactment. Directors and production teams interpret the script in relation to genre, period, medium, audience, and available resources. This interpretive activity transforms the written text into performance through decisions concerning acting style, scenography, rhythm, and visual composition. Pavis conceptualises this transformation as *mise en scène*, the organised arrangement of stage elements through which the text is realised as performance (24–29). Acting style, therefore, emerges from the interaction between dramaturgical structure and staging decisions rather than from the text alone. Approaches to interpretation and production style may be distinguished along three lines. The first is the interpretive approach, in which the director seeks to realise the playwright's intentions with a high degree of fidelity. Downs, Wright, and Ramsey state that interpretive directors aim to translate the play from page to stage as accurately as possible, maintaining consistency with the script's language and action (188). In this mode, characterisation

is guided by textual discipline, and design elements support the established dramatic world without substantial deviation.

The second approach permits controlled deviation from the script. Here, the director functions as an interpreter who translates the dramatic text into a performance language that may incorporate additional concepts or emphases. Brockett and Ball describe this approach as one in which the director extends the playwright's vision through selective reinterpretation while retaining the central thematic orientation of the play (322). Character interpretation under this method reflects a balance between textual guidance and creative intervention. The third approach places greater emphasis on the director's authority in shaping the production. In this case, the script serves as material for reconstruction during rehearsal, with alterations in movement, staging, and visual composition. Brockett and Ball identify this mode as one in which the director may significantly reshape the text to achieve a distinct production concept (323). Meyerhold's assertion that the director is the primary creative force in theatre and that the script may be moulded according to artistic intention further affirms this position (Brockett and Ball 452). Character interpretation within this framework becomes hybrid, as it is informed by dramaturgical cues and reconfigured through staging practices.

Contemporary writing on rehearsal and directing reinforces the collaborative basis of performance formation. Schmidt identifies rehearsal as a structured process in which theatre practitioners coordinate speech, gesture, movement, and spatial relations to produce performance outcomes (122–24). Glikpoe and Horsu observe that the director's task involves translating the script into visual and performative elements through interpretive decisions and actor guidance (15–18). Gllavica further maintains that the relationship between director, playwright, and actor remains central to the achievement of artistic objectives in theatre (67–70). These positions indicate that acting style is produced through coordinated artistic processes rather than individual effort. The interaction of these approaches results in hybridism of styles in character interpretation. In practice, productions do not adhere exclusively to a single method but combine fidelity to the script with interpretive adjustment and structural reorganisation. This is particularly evident in institutional theatre, where performance serves artistic and pedagogical functions. Characterisation in such settings reflects the convergence of textual structure, directorial interpretation, and design realisation. In the plays under consideration, this convergence produces varied acting styles that derive from the playwright's dramaturgy and are shaped through collaborative staging processes.

Characterisation of Women Revolutionary Government (WRG) in *Mulkin Mata*

The clamour for active participation of women in politics was enacted at the multi-purpose hall of the Federal College of Education (Special), Oyo by the 200 level students of the Department of Theatre Arts in June, 2002. In the revolutionary play, directed by Rufus Kehinde, strive to upstage the domineering role of men at the home and political fronts in acting styles that could be described as an hybrid of the realistic and cominal in the reversal role of women taken over traditional duties of men was dramatised.

This was characterised in an amusing situation in African politics where women seized power by force and try to emasculate the men by enacting and enforcing absurd laws in the dramatic universe. The imposition of the draconian laws led to bickerings in the ruling cabinet. Subsequently, one of the women leaders, Hassana Diakite confronted the Head of State, Hajiya Usmanu on the justification of their laws and oppression of men. The rebellion eventually led to the fall of Hajiya Usmanus' regime as the women lost control and support of the people.

The thematic thrust of the play is much more than the search for identify or equality, it is a revolt against, and total overthrow of patriarchy. This is implied in the title of the play, *Mulkin Mata* which means women's regime or women's rule, exclusively. Female centred nature of the play was achieved from the beginning with the playwright's dramatic technique of achieving a near reality through box office in his stage direction. The usual roles of issuing tickets and ushering people into the theatres reserved for pretty young ladies must be taken by young men who are as pleasant as possible. Akoh (2).

While the women revolution led by Hajiya (Kehinde Kayode) recorded some achievements in the political and economic spheres as acted out in their boldness and assertiveness in governance, decree three on sex prohibition exposed their weakness. It was aimed at given the women the freedom and more opportunity to work without distraction from their husbands. It forbids outright any form of sexual intercourse "any man caught attempting to break this decree will be castrated". *Mulkin Mata* (2). Ironically, this only helps to promote prostitution as boys and men take to visiting brothers, and clandestine sexual arrangements between husbands and wives, leading to the waning of the revolutionary ideals.



Fig. 1 Hajiya Usmanu and her aid announcing the mission of Women Revolutionary Government (WRG)

This inability to control libido played out with some of the revolutionary soldiers succumbing to sexual desire of their husbands in secrecy and sexual appeal of the prostitutes in facial expression, gesture and posture to entice men in the brothel. Similarly, enchanting was the comic relief and play within a play of the shoe mender and his girl friend and the true to life poise of Alhaji Saleh's white girl friend acted by Ikumapayi Lateefat in the foreign scene. What further enhanced the humanisation of the women revolution on stage by the students was the simplicity of plot and language in the blend of satiric and comic characterisation. There was no dull moment, character interpretation in each scene was with precision and accuracy apart from few cases of weak articulation and projection. Hajiya Usmanu (Kehinde Kayode) stood out in her confidence, composure and good projection. This characterisation was balanced up in Hassana Diakite, acted by Dupe Popoola in action and voicing out with these words.

You are all hypocrites; the men are a necessary evil. Let us call them to a dialogue, and let us, together with them, stabilise the country. It is not enough to be economically sound. People in this country need the liberty to associate fully with one another without discrimination. We have proved the equality of our sexes in leadership. Let us also pursue happiness (*Mulkin Mata 2*).

Dramatisation of Abuse of Womanhood in *Aishatu*

The staging of Iyorwuese Hagher's *Aishatu* at the New Hall of the Federal College of Education (Special), Oyo, on 27 and 28 April 2005, presents a compelling instance of how dramaturgy, performance training, and social commentary converge within educational theatre. The production, directed by Hameed Lawal as part of the 2004/2005 pre-NCE workshop, demonstrates the capacity of emerging performers to engage meaningfully with demanding thematic material. Although the performers were at an early stage of training, the interpretive effort evident in their vocal delivery, physical expression, and stage interaction suggests a level of artistic commitment that exceeds routine classroom exercise. The production affirms the pedagogic function of theatre as a space where technical training and social consciousness are developed simultaneously.

Character interpretation in the production is marked by a sustained attempt to humanise the dramatic figures and render their experiences intelligible to the audience. The performances of Tola (Rodah Olayinka), Aishatu (Onyesom Ruth and Sadiku Bisi), Rekiya (Agboola Opeyemi and Seun Mohammed), Inuwa (Ogundiji Kayode), and Udeng (James God's Time) demonstrate a clear engagement with the psychological and social dimensions of their roles. Rather than presenting abstract types, the actors embody recognisable individuals whose actions reflect conditions of economic hardship, moral compromise, and social pressure. This approach aligns with the functional requirement of acting within such a dramaturgical structure, where clarity of intention and communicative precision take precedence over elaborate stylisation.

The visual and material elements of the production further reinforce its thematic direction. Costume, properties, and set design are deployed with sufficient clarity to establish environment, social status, and situational context. These elements do not operate as decorative additions but as integral components of meaning construction, enabling the audience to recognise the relevance of the dramatic action to familiar social conditions. Through this coordination of acting and design, the production sustains coherence in its representation of contemporary social concerns. Nonetheless, certain limitations in performance execution are evident. Instances of uncertainty in entrances and exits, along with occasional recitation of lines without full emotional integration, indicate the developmental stage of the performers. In addition, the portrayal of culturally specific speech patterns, particularly in the characters of Alhaji Wadi (Olotu Oladapo) and Dr. Apeh (Jide Oludiran), lacks sufficient precision in accent and vocal modulation. These weaknesses, however,

do not undermine the overall communicative effect of the production; rather, they point to areas requiring further technical refinement within the training process.

Despite these limitations, the production succeeds in conveying the central concerns of the play. Through a combination of dialogue, gesture, and pictorial staging, the actors communicate the consequences of drug addiction, trafficking, and prostitution with clarity. The use of pantomime and visual representation proves effective in illustrating actions that might otherwise be difficult to stage directly, thereby sustaining audience engagement and comprehension. The director's selection of the play is thus justified by its relevance to prevailing social conditions, particularly the persistence of these vices among young people. At the centre of the dramatic action is the character of Aishatu, whose trajectory reflects the intersection of poverty, aspiration, and moral dislocation. As a teenager confronted with the inability to continue her education due to financial constraint, she turns to alternative means of survival and advancement. Her movement from the domestic space to the sphere of illicit activity is neither abrupt nor arbitrary; it is presented as a progression shaped by material necessity and social influence. Her encounter with Rekiya, already immersed in drug-related activities, marks a decisive moment in this progression, as it introduces her to a network of practices that promise immediate gain but carry long-term consequences.

The dramatisation of Aishatu's experience extends beyond individual misfortune to address the condition of womanhood within a socio-economic structure that limits access to legitimate opportunities. The play presents the female body as a site of exploitation within systems of exchange governed by wealth and power. In doing so, it does not merely depict moral failure but exposes the conditions that produce such outcomes. The contrast between Aishatu and Tola, who persists in her educational pursuit despite similar constraints, introduces a counterpoint that underscores the possibility of alternative responses to adversity. Through this interplay of character, action, and staging, the production demonstrates the adaptability of Hagher's dramaturgy to performance. The thematic focus on social deviance is articulated through performance choices that prioritise clarity, immediacy, and audience recognition. The result is a theatrical realisation that not only communicates the narrative of the play but also invites reflection on the social conditions it represents.



Fig. 2 Aishatu (Ruth Onyeson) sniffing cocaine

The progression of Aishatu's character from a vulnerable schoolgirl to a participant in illicit networks constitutes the structural and moral centre of the play. Her transformation is neither abrupt nor exaggerated; it unfolds through a sequence of choices shaped by economic deprivation, social influence, and the lure of material advancement. The initial attraction to wealth, facilitated through association with drug barons and other exploitative figures, produces a gradual detachment from formal education and ethical restraint. This trajectory culminates in psychological disintegration, thereby establishing a causal relationship between social conditions and personal collapse. The representation aligns with sociological positions that identify economic pressure and peer influence as determining factors in youth involvement in deviant activities (Alemika and Chukwuma 214; UNODC 67). The stage realisation of this transformation reinforces the didactic function of the play, presenting consequences not as abstract warnings but as embodied outcomes.

The contrast between Aishatu and Tola introduces a structural counterpoint that strengthens the dramatic argument. While both characters are subjected to similar conditions of financial constraint, their responses diverge significantly. Tola's persistence in education functions as a stabilising moral axis within the play, demonstrating that adversity does not necessitate moral compromise. This duality reflects a dramaturgical strategy in which opposing character arcs are

used to foreground choice and consequence. Adeoti observes that such character contrasts in African drama often serve as instruments for ethical evaluation, directing audience attention to the implications of individual decisions within social systems (97). The stage interpretation of these roles, therefore, extends beyond narrative function to pedagogic articulation. The deployment of Brechtian devices in the play contributes significantly to its performance structure. The use of narration, episodic construction, and the selection of actors from the audience operates to interrupt emotional absorption and direct attention to the social issues under examination. Brecht's principle of distancing (*Verfremdungseffekt*) seeks to prevent passive identification and instead promote reflective observation (Brecht 91). In *Aishatu*, this is achieved through simplified dialogue, direct address, and the reorganisation of performance space, all of which facilitate clarity of communication. The effectiveness of such devices within educational theatre has been noted in applied performance research, where detachment is considered essential for engaging audiences with social problems without reducing them to spectacle (Boal 122; Prentki and Preston 45).

The modification of the driving scene to a hotel bar setting further illustrates the adaptive capacity of the production. This adjustment is not merely a practical decision but a directorial strategy aimed at enhancing intelligibility and maintaining audience engagement. Within performance practice, such alterations are consistent with the principle that staging must respond to the competence of performers and the expectations of the audience. McAuley argues that performance space and scenographic choices must be organised in relation to the conditions of production and reception, as these factors determine how meaning is perceived (31). The relocation of the scene from mimed driving to a recognisable social environment therefore strengthens the communicative clarity of the production. The thematic focus on drug addiction, trafficking, and prostitution situates the play within discourse on youth vulnerability and gendered exploitation. Empirical studies indicate that young women in economically constrained environments are disproportionately exposed to networks that commodify the body in exchange for financial security (UN Women 54; Nwoye 138). The dramatisation of *Aishatu*'s experience reflects this condition, presenting womanhood as subject to systemic pressures that extend beyond individual morality. At the same time, the play avoids reduction to social determinism by presenting alternative pathways through characters such as Tola. This balance between structural critique and individual agency strengthens the interpretive depth of the performance.

The reception of the production confirms its relevance within educational and community theatre. The audience response, particularly the suggestion that the play be taken to schools,

indicates recognition of its capacity to function as a tool for social sensitisation. Applied theatre practitioners have emphasised the role of performance in addressing public concerns, especially in contexts where formal education may not sufficiently engage with issues such as drug abuse and exploitation (Nicholson 78; Thompson 64). In this regard, *Aishatu* operates not only as a dramatic text but as an instrument of social instruction, capable of extending its impact beyond the theatre space. The cumulative effect of these elements, character construction, performance technique, directorial adaptation, and thematic clarity, demonstrates the strength of Hagher's dramaturgy in accommodating varied performance conditions. The play sustains interpretive flexibility while maintaining coherence in its representation of social problems. Its realisation in performance confirms that the abuse of womanhood is not presented as isolated misconduct but as a condition produced by identifiable socio-economic forces. Through this approach, the production achieves clarity of purpose, coherence of style, and effectiveness of communication.

Satiric Portrayal of Societal Foibles in Hagher's Anti-People

Set in Northern Nigeria, stagibility of the plays lies in simplicity of the plot and language. Segmented into five happenings with action centred on Alhaji Nakoni's house, Sarkin Rigons palace and the court. Play begins at Alhaji Nakoni's gate with a flashback to events that transformed Musa Rigon, a retired and poor soldier to a gate man to heighten suspense and sustain the interest of the audience. In defence of his style of dramaturgy and language, the playwright contends in the preface to his collection of plays that;

I have avoided the pitfalls of dramatists that merely flaunt the supernatural and the traditional (antiquities) in content and style. Our man-made problems can do without a *deus ex machina*, and our traditional rituals find better accommodation in our museums (*Comrade and Voltage*, Preface iv).

Directed by Hameed Lawal and Ibrahim Auta, in character interpretation of the play; the simplicity of the language and setting was fully explored by the directors to bring out the best of the up-coming actors and actresses. Mostly outstanding in speech and movements are: Ashamu Opeyemi (Alhaji Nakoni), Olukunle Tolulope (Sarkin Rigon), Akinade Opeyemi (Judge), Otukoya Taiwo (Jumai), Ilesanmi Lukman (Aboki), Oladapo Oluwadamilare (Musa Rigon), Ajisope Odunola (Lawyer) and Adedokun Yemisi (Lawyer).

The good interpretation of these major actors in speech, movement, facial expression, posture and gesture makeup for the inadequacies of other elements of production. This went a long way to

sustain the tempo of the play in speech and action from Happenings one to five. Among these captivating scenes were the court scenes. While the argumentative and logical presentation of the lawyers were quite edifying and entertaining, Aboki (Ilesanmi Luquman's pidgin English and disregard for court ethics created comic relief. A similar scene was re-enacted in Sarkin Rigon's palace, when Jumai's celebration of freedom from her drunkard husbands was cut short with forceful marriage to Sarkin Rigon. The dance and musical interlude to cool nerves and ease tension after the court session of Sarkin Rigon was well choreographed. This dramatic action in speech and action were strengthened with appropriate contemporary costume and set as exemplified in costuming of the judge, lawyers and, the court room, Sarkin Rigon and Bank manager.

Staged on 30th August, 2012, *Anti-People* is a dramatisation of how the rich and the powerful in the society who normally use their influence and affluence to oppress the poor. Musa Rigon, a retired and poor soldier lost the land he inherited from his great grandfather to Alhaji Nakomi who connived with the traditional ruler to acquire the land. Attempts by Rigon to reclaim his landed property through the customary and civil courts failed because of the vested interest of the traditional ruler in the customary court and the legal technicalities in the civil court.



Fig. 3 Court Scene in *Anti-People*

After losing the legal battle, the retired soldier resigned to fate by becoming a gateman in the house of the man who deprives him of his land. It is in the same pathetic situation that his friend Aboki, lost his wife to Sarkin Rigon after separating the couple in his customary court. Relevance of the play to our social reality lies in the fact that, there are many Alhaji Nakomis in our society who oppress and to exploit the masses through forceful acquisition of landed property to seek favour from the powers that be, for self-aggrandisement. This is exemplified in Nigerian politicians and business men who, with backing of self-centred traditional rulers, can always acquire land at choice locations. In the same vein, Musa Rigon epitomised the less privileged in the society who have lost their rights to legal technicalities and manipulations of the powers that be. The production was a sensitisation on the oppressive tendencies of those in power at all levels of governance.

Conclusion

This study has examined the production of the selected plays with particular attention to the relationship between the playwright's dramaturgical structure and the resulting production styles

in acting and scenographic realisation. The analysis establishes that Hagher's dramaturgy provides a flexible framework that supports varied interpretive choices in performance. Central to this relationship is the consistent deployment of Brechtian techniques, which regulate audience response through controlled detachment and reflective engagement rather than emotional immersion. These techniques are evident across the productions considered. In *Mulkin Mata*, the use of a large television screen to announce the revolutionary programme of Hajiya Usmanu introduces a mediated form of communication that interrupts conventional stage illusion. In *Aishatu*, narration and the selection of performers from the audience serve to restructure the boundary between performer and spectator, thereby directing attention to the social implications of the action. In *Anti-People*, the use of flashback as a structural device enables the reconstruction of past events in order to foreground the systematic dispossession and dehumanisation of Musa Rigon. The opening image of the gate, which situates Rigon within the compound of his oppressor, establishes the material and symbolic conditions of his subjugation and frames the dramatic action that follows.

The cumulative effect of these staging strategies is the generation of sustained audience attention through clarity of presentation and controlled progression of events. Suspense is achieved through the orderly unfolding of cause and consequence, which guides the audience towards an understanding of the social conditions represented. Within this framework, the director, actors, and designers engage with the text as material for structured interpretation, exploring varied performance possibilities while maintaining coherence in thematic communication. A significant outcome of the productions examined is the demonstration of the malleability of Hagher's plays. The simplicity of language and clarity of dramaturgical construction enable adaptation across different performance conditions without loss of meaning. This quality extends the relevance of the plays beyond stage performance to potential translation into screen media. At a time when screen production exerts increasing influence on modes of performance consumption, the adaptability of these plays presents practical opportunities for further development. The study therefore concludes that Hagher's dramaturgy sustains interpretive flexibility, supports effective stage realisation, and offers viable prospects for adaptation within contemporary performance practice.

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