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# Research Innovator

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Editor-In-Chief  
Prof. K.N. Shelke

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A detailed still-life composition featuring a quill pen as the central element. The quill is positioned diagonally, with its tip resting on a scroll of aged parchment. The scroll is secured with a red wax seal and a red ribbon. In the background, a lit candle in a brass holder casts a warm glow. In the foreground, a glass inkwell with a quill inside sits on a wooden surface, alongside a red wax seal and a small wooden object. The overall scene evokes a sense of traditional scholarship and research.

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**A Peer-Reviewed Refereed and Indexed  
Multidisciplinary International Research Journal**

**Volume II Issue V: October – 2015**

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**Shifting the Borders: Genre-crossing in Modern Africa Drama**

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One of the emerging features of African literature is radical breakaway from the literary canons of the West. One implication of this is that new forms or genres are emerging. The borders of forms in African literature are so continuously shifting that in the foreseeable future many 'new forms' are certain. Many critics have followed Aristotle to classify drama into tragedy and comedy, both as modes of being and reading (A. N. Akwanya 14). The two modes have been viewed as being at the opposite poles, tragedy being the *other* of comedy. In recent times, however, the borderline between tragedy and comedy has come under criticism, with some suggesting the co-existence of both forms in a single work. Hence it is our target in this paper to investigate this possibility in our reading of Fidelis Okoro's *Prof. Zemzi's Last Rehearsal*, and by so doing, foreground the budding concept of *genre-crossing* in modern African drama.

**Key Words:** Genre-crossing/generic plurality, modern African drama, tragedy, comedy, form(s)

**Introduction**

Part of the decolonising of African literature proposed by the Bolekaja critics, the trio of Chinweizu, Ihechukwu Madubuike and Onwuchekwa Jemie, is that the forms and genres of African literature are markedly different from those its European counterpart (Chinweizu et al 1-3), for according to Rene Wellek and Austin Warren, 'every "culture" has its genres' (234). With this understanding, we adopt what Tejumola Olaniyan and Ato Quayson call 'a relativist theory of genre' (323). They hold that Eurocentric discourse of African literature even inferiorise African writers and critics 'for not having, for instance, "drama" that looked like European drama (323). The

earlier critics of African literature equated it with European literature, a kind of appendage. And this made them to look for equivalents of European forms in African literature. But with the renaissance of the 1980s, many critics of African literature have come to see that should have its own forms. This reawakening has focused mainly on the criticism of African literature. In the wake of this movement, several critics, who have come to be known in circle of African literary scholarship as Afrocentric critics, have made attempts to 'dislodge the literature from the canonical influences of the Western literary tradition and criticism' (Afolayan Olusola 1). In the 21st century, we have come to see that there are more

radical innovations in terms of structure and forms of the works published by African writers. Olaniyan and Quayson have observed that more innovative and adventurous genre theorising is to be found in drama studies (323). African drama has always been said to be more radical than the other genres. Allwell Abalogu Onukaogu and Ezechi Onyerionwu in their seminal work, *21st Century Nigerian Literature: An Introductory Text*, posit that one of the defining variables of 21st Nigerian (and by extension African) literature, especially the dramatic genre, is:

‘breathtaking linguistic and structural experimentations that members of the older generation would have tagged too flamboyant to pass for serious literature. This is an extension of the audacious display of liberties and radicalism that have been identified with this new literature’ (106).

There has not been any known attempt to see how this experimentation manifests in a drama text. The traditional, Eurocentric understanding is that drama is either tragic or comic. Sometimes a few critics include tragicomic. But we have investigated here the possibility of an admixture of the elements of the two forms of drama in a way that is different from tragicomedy.

### **On Dramatic Genres**

The borderline between tragedy and comedy is still slippery in literary criticism. But in most cases the two have been viewed as being at the opposite poles of the spectrum. Though this

presupposition may not be altogether unfounded, it is still unresolved whether tragedy and comedy can spring from one and the same source. Socrates in the *Symposium* holds that the genius of tragedy can be the same as that of comedy (Plato qtd in Sewall 1). But Sewall argues otherwise: ‘for it seems clear...that the genius of tragedy is not the same as the genius of comedy’ (1). Yet he recognizes the ‘undeniable truth that the highest comedy gains power from its sense of tragic possibilities, and the profoundest tragedy presents a full of fleeting vision, through a temporary disorder, of an ordered universe to which comedy is witness’ (1). For Akwanya, the whole argument is ‘more a matter of convention than of nature’ (39). As open-ended as the argument may seem, it is a given, at least within the trio, that one artist can be a writer of comedy and tragedy. But whether it is the same genius that inspires both is a moot question. Seen in the controversy is a deliberate short-circuiting of the possibility of the two modes co-existing in a single text. But not even Akwanya’s contention, reposed on the ontological bases of the modes, precludes this condition of possibility. Although he hinted at it in his explanation of tragicomedy, which he said closed the gap between tragedy and comedy, making them ‘inseparable,’ he did not go further to say that a work can be a tragedy as well as comedy at the same time. Besides, it should be noted that tragicomedy is a genre of its own, just as tragedy and comedy are, and Akwanya alludes to this when he says that it is seen by some as

'the characteristic mode of modernist drama' (39). Sewall appears to be closer to our point with what he identifies as a 'calculated mixture' of tragedy and comedy in a text. But implicit in this is Akwanya's account of tragicomedy which, we may say, is possible in a work, but falls short of our notion of genre-crossing or generic plurality in modern African drama. Granted that tragedy and comedy originate from one and the same source as argued by some, or are 'inseparable' (Akwanya), or in the sense Sewall has seen it, then nothing negates the contingency of the co-existence of these two modes in a work, since they are not parallel lines that can never intersect. Hence it is our target in this paper to show and bring to the limelight the condition of this possibility in our reading of Fidelis Okoro's *Prof. Zemzi's Last Rehearsal*.

### **The Tragic Plain**

Everything is in a constant flux, believe the scientists, and such is the fluidity tragedy has come to be subjected to over time. R.P. Draper in this regard observes that 'a single unchanging definition of tragedy is unattainable' (qtd in Nwahunanya 158). Thus it becomes a platitude to reiterate that Aristotle's definition or principle of tragedy has waned significantly with the passage of time; and to stick to it in disregard to the changing convention is ultimately anachronistic, and to insinuate that tragedy is unrealizable in modernist drama. But it is evident, at least with the publication of Arthur Miller's 'Tragedy and the Common Man' in 1949, that 'tragedy does alter its shape and meaning with chameleon

variability' (Draper 158). To this end, Raymond Williams has noted that '...the varieties of tragic experience are to be interpreted by reference to the changing conventions and institutions' (qtd in Nwahunanya 167). It is in this consideration that we begin to read *Prof. Zemzi's Last Rehearsal* as tragedy in modernist sense of African drama. Hence our working definition of tragedy is owed to Oscar Mandel. For him,

[a] work of art is tragic if it substantiates the following situation: A protagonist who commands our earnest goodwill is impelled in a given world by a purpose, or undertakes an action, of a certain seriousness and magnitude; and by that very purpose or action, subject to that same world, necessarily and inevitably meets with grave spiritual or physical suffering (20).

At the level of action, the comic beginning of the play is overtaken by its tragic dimension with the appearance of Prof. Zemzi on the stage, the hero of the text. Thus the action assumes a serious import, and this is underpinned by the students' reactions indicated in the stage direction: 'KINGSLEY sees him first and motions to the others. JULIET quickly wears her blouse. In a moment all are alert and quiet' (21). Immediately, the career of this character comes to the fore: to restore order to the disordered universe of Usamba University. This in line with Mandel becomes Prof. Zemzi's 'tragic purpose.' Nwahunanya would point out that in modern tragedy, the events that cause tragedy are established before the



hero is born into them (163). In the case of Prof. Zemzi, we learn that things went the wrong way when he was on sabbatical leave (33), and his return from the leave is just the same as being born in the text. Like Okolo in Okara's *The Voice*, Zemzi has this sense of order before he embarks on the leave, only to come back and be met with moral decadence, the reign of mediocrity, and in general, corruption. He regrettably observes in the text: 'The rigour that used to characterize the academia when we came here is gone. No work. No challenges. Just mercantile mentality and incredible mediocrity' (60). These situations are what have set the University of Usamba towards anarchy, having been freed of its moorings by bad leadership (Nwahunanya 732). Instead of accepting the order of the day, Zemzi wills to challenge the powers that be (Sewall 36); he resolves to take up arms against a sea of troubles, if only that will bring people back to their senses. But by so doing, he 'shoots beyond the mark' (*Prometheus Bound*) as is tragic heroes' wont: he strives to reify his ideal Sanglindon (a place of perfection as thematised in the rehearsal) in this present disordered universe. And this can only be met with a heavy price, possibly death or in its symbolic form, heart attack (142).

The moment he launches himself as it were into this career, we begin to see inauspicious fate hanging over him, what Okoro has called 'the clouds of inevitability' ('Archetype of Azazel' 42). Zemzi directs his caustic comments squarely on the board members, and herein lies his *harmatia*, for like Prometheus, he

is said to 'give too much license to [his] tongue.' One of the characters points this out: 'Juliet: .... Just talk, talk, talk. You make one mistake e go tell you the history of Atlantic Ocean. (5). The contradiction encountered in the text inheres in this remark. Does Prof. Zemi's downfall or heart attack on the last scene results from his much talking or the appearance of the police? It is true that the students have remarked in the exposition that his heart attack usually comes whenever he does much talking (4). But what is this talking about? It is evident in the text that Prof. Zemi shouts on two occasions: either on his rehearsal with the student actors or on a quarrel with Prof. Frederick, Prof. Kandem, Mrs Pompeli and his wife. In whichever occasion, it is still to bring back order to the seemingly disordered world. Hence his heart attack can be seen as a logical consequence of the action he has undertaken. Having done much talking for the day, and now is awarded with a retirement letter with the police trooping in for his arrest, Prof. Zemzi suffers a total breakdown. For his tragedy has gathered momentum as the play progresses, and is ready now to unleash its full weight on him unmitigated. Thus like Edmund in Shakespeare's *King Lear*, his 'wheel is come full circle' (170-180).

Prof Zemzi fails to decipher Frederick's idiom that 'I am a man of policy, I believe in policy. And policies can change. And when policies change, those who laugh cry and those who cry laugh' (37). Not even Prof. Bameka's warning that 'there is fire on the mountain' (87) is enough to restrain him from the course of action he has

chosen, maintaining that ‘nothing on this planet can make me leave this rehearsal!’ Yet unknown to him that he is rounding off his last rehearsal (66). Even if he is to rehearse with only one actor, improvising the rest, he is still bent on carrying his play to Sanglidon, the home of drama, just like it does not matter if Governor George Ide George in *Quagmire* is to run Satana State without commissioners, his wife or even mother (Onyeka Odo qtd in *The Muse* 40, 31). Proceed therefore Prof. Zemzi must, even when he has retired, ‘I’ll never leave. I will fight to the last’ (PZLR 141). Hence we see a hero who has the ‘quality of soul’ (Murray) to confront his ‘boundary situation’ (Jasper), not minding that this might be a blind alley. To this end, Prof. Zemzi is a hero of the type Nietzsche calls the ‘titanically striving individual’ (*The Birth of Tragedy*, 72); he struggles because he has to (Akwanya 32), otherwise the ‘whole university will collapse like a pack of cards’ (PZLR 141).

Nwahunanya asserts that the moral quality of the hero’s action depends on the existential situation in which he is immersed, which he is aware of but neither fully understands nor can control (*Literary Criticism*, 119). Premised on this, we can say that Prof. Zemzi is not wholly right in his venture, especially when we consider his relationship with his family. But this only qualifies him in Aristotle’s sense that the tragic hero is ‘a man not pre-eminently virtuous and just, whose misfortune is brought upon him not by vice and depravity but by some error of judgment...’ (13). Hence it is this error of judgment, this inability to see clear the

true situation of things, that propels the tragic hero inexorably in his action. And for our hero, his own case is ‘so I’m to take order from you, a boy employed here when I was already a professor?’ (PZLR 31), with a blurred vision or what Mandel calls ‘solemn vagueness’ (5) that Prof. Frederick is on the seat of power irrespective of age. This can only be reckoned to him as hubris, without which there would have been no significant action in the text (Sewall 37). ‘If “tragedy” occurs when the accepted order of things is fundamentally questioned only to be the more triumphantly reaffirmed” (Weisinger)...then our pleasure derives inevitably from the reaffirmation...?’ (Mandel 72). Thus the universe of Usamba University already on the brink of chaos springs back and reasserts itself again when the aberrant figure of Prof. Zemzi has been expunged. And this brings Prof. Zemzi closely to Northrop Frye’s concept of *pharmakos* (41), especially when we hear Prof. Kandem remarks, ‘We need our peace and there can’t be peace when a demon is around. ‘Pushing [Prof. Zemzi] out is a job that must be done’ (PZLR 40). But he falls short of this when placed alongside the legendary *pharmakos* figures like Hardy’s Tess, Hawthorne’s Hester Prynne, Euripides Iphigeneia, Melville’s Billy Budd etc (see Frye 41). Prof. Zemzi’s suffering in this sense can be said to be self-inflicted, or what Frye identifies somewhere as ‘the logical consequence of the hero’s action’ (41).

The satirical language of the text tinged with dark humour waters down the seriousness of action as required by

Aristotle. But beneath the cloak of this scatological humour lies the semantic density of the text which is of tragic import. Nonetheless, it is the common feature of modernist literature to have distortion of shape; therefore, *Prof. Zemzi Last Rehearsal* need not be an exception. For here we see tragedy known for its seriousness being remodelled on the form of biting satire. What Mathew Arnold identifies as 'high seriousness' in tragedy is thematically and structurally undermined in the text, the tragedy having been now forced into satiric garb. And Mandel has this to say about Aristotle's seriousness in tragedy: 'If tragedy is so generously defined that all serious art turns out to be tragic, we lose the fact that among serious works differences so remarkable exist that they exact from us separate terms....'(7); as a result, we are to believe that seriousness is not the hallmark of tragedy, neither is it its exclusive preserve. Somewhere he has argued that comedy and farce can be perfectly serious (92), but the thrust of his argument is summed up in 'Mithridate...would have been a serious play with an unhappy ending, but not one whit more tragic' (30). This presupposes that there can be a serious play even with an unhappy ending, yet not a tragedy'; consequently, seriousness cannot be a major determinant of tragedy, though it can be part of it.

Besides the distortion seen in the language of the text, we see the plot structure not adhering to the one recognized by Aristotle. For Aristotle, *muthos* (plot) is 'the life and soul... of tragedy...(Ch. 6), and consists of a beginning, middle and

end (Ch.7), which make up a whole, with the one leading to the next, and the other resulting from it. But it is evident in the text that the subplot which involves the students has less to do with the tragedy of Prof. Zemzi; yet, this does not make *Prof. Zemzi Last Rehearsal* any less tragic. Mandel posits that '[the tragic] situation is not necessarily the whole work of art as we find it, say, in *Oedipus* or *Madame Bovary*. Though it fulfils all the requirements of the definition, it may occur as only one section of a larger piece' (99). From this postulate, we can say that the tragedy of Prof. Zemzi culminates in the last scene, the moment of his retirement which is subsequently followed by the arrival of the police. This is equally his recognition point, and for once he tries to reason with the antagonist – 'we are not really enemies...' (PZLR 134) – but this is only a belated effort, for he has already upset the balance of the moral universe, and is now being propelled inexorably to his ultimate end.

On the whole, our reading of *Prof. Zenzi's Last Rehearsal* as a tragedy is authorized by the following quotation from Mandel:

The point is that tragedy is a concept; it is not a particular form, like drama; it is not a form requiring a special kind of diction; it is not the conveyor of a specific emotion or a specific world-view; it serves no specified imposed function in reality; it handles or taboos no specific subject matter; and finally, it obeys no specific structural plan. Tragedy occurs when tragic situation is represented in art briefly or at

length, whether or not it is represented with a beginning, middle, and end; whether or not it has unity of time, place, and action; whether or not its action is likely, probable, or impossible, whether or not it has a scene of recognition, a climax or even a staged reversal (102).

Seen in this light, nothing vitiates the reading of *Prof. Zemzi's Last Rehearsal* as a full-blown tragic text.

### The Comic Possibility

But that we have just done the tragic reading of the text does not rule out its comic orientation. In fact, it is the thesis of this essay to prove the possibility of reading *Prof. Zemzi's Last Rehearsal* as tragedy in one sense, and comedy in another sense. Hence Aristotle would hold that comedy is an 'imitation of men worse than the average' (5). But this only puts a question mark on the plays we have always read as comedy. What can we say about Shakespeare's romantic comedies, say *A Mid-summer Night Dream*, *Much Ado about Nothing*, *As You Like It*, and even *Twelfth Night*? Are the heroes and heroines in these plays worse than the everyday man? A look at Aristotle's treatment of tragedy and comedy will reveal that it was a matter of predilection, or perhaps that tragedy was the predominant art in his period. And this has only made for unnecessary complication and contradiction in the understanding of tragedy and comedy. Frye is a bit realist in his handling of comedy, to the extent that

his perception of comedy can be said to fly in the face of Aristotle's. He says:

If [the hero] is superior neither to other men nor to his environment, the hero is one of us: we respond to a sense of his common humanity, and we demand from the poet the same canons of probability that we find in our own experience. This gives us the hero of the *low mimetic* mode, of most comedy and realistic fiction (34).

From the above, it is clear that comedy need not involve degenerated individuals, and this, of course, qualifies Prof. Zemzi as a comic figure. On other hand, the assessment of comedy should not be so much dependent on the personality of the fictional personages as on the existential situation these personages are immersed in, and how they respond to it. Akwanya states that 'in comedy, the universe exists for man, and often responsive to his needs; so the nets that people are caught in are of their own making, or of the making of their kind. The mistakes they make are moreover, redeemable (*Discourse Analysis* 46). Probing into our text will reveal what Nwahunanya calls 'a mechanical universe' (159), whereby human situation is manipulated to achieve one's end. The case of Prof. Fredrick readily comes to mind who could go to the length of bringing down the retirement age from 65 to 60 just to make sure that Prof. Zemzi is rusticated from the university. His remark that 'I am a man of policy.... And policies can change' (*PZLR* 37) speaks so much of his power to influence the law and bring about the desired change. To him, Prof.



Zemzi must be got rid of because he disturbs the peace, as observed by his colleague (40). Even in Aristophanes' comedies, 'the symposium at the end signifies a new community ready to start again on a new footing ... or a continuation after a disruption, the action of the play being the interruption' (Akwanya 83). The disruption here is Prof. Zemzi who, for the sake of the new community that must emerge, has to be edged out. The moment we see Prof. Zemzi trying to lift the veils from the smooth surface of experience to reveal unevenness and folly, his figure begins to crystallize along the legendary figures of this type. We are quickly reminded of Socrates in Aristophanes' *The Clouds*, of Moliere's *Alceste*, or the more recent ones, of Soyinka's *Lakunle*, of Okoro's *George Ide George*, and so on. These are heroes whose careers are trying to bring people back from their folly, and possibly redeem their society that is already adrift. But we see them fail in this attempt, and the status quo they would change restored and reinforced. This attests to the redeemability of human situation in comedy; the brief moment of disorder is redeemed from the impending chaos with the mechanical universe reasserting itself. But it should be noted that this universe may not be resting on moral uprightness; what matters is that the status quo is retained, without any illumination so to speak, but at least with the people of the same ilk constituting their world when the aberrant figures have been expunged. This is what Frye identifies as 'the integration of human society' (43) and alludes to what Ingram

calls 'the self-avowed belief in mankind' (qtd in Akwanya 43): the ability of man to make and unmake his situation. Hence the moral earnestness of *Alceste* in a society that has lost its moorings from the pivot of morality and sincerity can only make one knit one's brows, and see him as a misfit to be got rid of. In the same vein, Prof. Zemzi's insistence on perfection in his drama rehearsal, and criticism of existing standard(s) plunges him into the destiny of his archetypal figures: exile, banishment, retirement or anything of the sort. But we cannot read the comedy of this text in the light of Prof. Zemzi alone; other characters contribute very significantly in the realisation of the text as a comedy.

It is observed that comedy does not probe to the root of things like tragedy. It does not concern itself so much with the cause of the fleeting disorder, but strives to manoeuvre or wriggle itself from this, and restore its order of the day. Thus in *Prof. Zemzi Last Rehearsal*, we see the other characters not troubled by the prevailing moral decadence, mediocrity and corruption that Prof. Zemzi complains about, but by how they can efface these realities, even if it entails giving Prof. Zemzi the boot. To them, it does not matter if a student has to sleep with the lecturers to score higher grades, it does not matter if the lecturers are bribing their way into professorship, neither does it matter if Prof. Zemzi's house is set ablaze due to the unrestrained action of his family; what matters is that, quoting *Phillinte* in *Misanthrope*, '[t]his is just the nature of the society,' and whether *Alceste* or Zemzi



likes it or not it has got to continue moving.

If *Prof. Zemzi's Last Rehearsal* is a comedy, then it must be a satiric comedy replete with biting remarks, and interspersed with dark humour. Akwanya observes that satire is a constant companion of art work especially comedy, and not a separate literary form (38). As a satire, its criticism is mounted against the existing institution that is being rocked by mediocrity. Thus we read: 'You sleep with a woman, you give her BA. You sleep with a woman, you give her MA. And if I were not here you would have been sleeping with them and giving them PhDs' (PZLR 36). This is followed by the most humorous scene in the play, yet it is as blunt as a double-edge sword to those it is directed to. One will simply swallow hard at a professor of theatre art who pronounces *epilogue epilogwe*, but this cannot be taken lying down by the addressee; for though it said in a hilarious environment, it has the full implication of mediocrity, incompetence and illiteracy embedded in it.

Folly and laughter have been identified as the underlying features in comedy, but Akwanya counters these as being the exclusiveness of comedy (*Discourse Analysis* 42). In any event, one cannot read *Prof. Zemzi* without bringing one's attention to the folly of Prof. Zemzi and Juliet, and the laughter ensuing from roughly all the scenes in the play. That of Prof. Zemzi is brought into focus on the scene he refuses his wife even one hundred zambi as advised by Kingsley, leaving Mrs. Pompeli and Jane to provide

it. One with good sense could have simply averted the trouble by giving her the money, not minding if one has given any before. Juliet, of course without gainsaying, is the most foolish character in the text. This is made more poignant in her use of both Pidgin and broken English which as well deviates from the accepted standard. Hence she says, 'I, I, I did not tooked my breakfast in the morning' (PZLR 71). A student of English who cannot express herself in an error-free sentence, thus making Prof. Zemzi remark thus: 'Your mouth is the grave of grammar' (71), and to give her a role that requires one who speaks impeccable English is to put 'gold in the hands of a blacksmith' (87). For laughter, whether 'thoughtful laughter' (Meredith qtd in Akwanya 47) or the one which 'temporarily lifts from us the weight of the world' (Segal qtd in Akwanya 47), it is seen in every humorous scene in the play. But this, however, does not undermine the weight of action to that of, say, lampoon, or burlesque, though the play embodies the features of the two.

### Conclusion

By way of conclusion, I would say: as a work of art breaks away from the convention, it inaugurates its own convention, giving rise to new critical insights. It might be provisionally true that Africa did not witness different phases of representation of forms of drama as we see in Europe. But granted that the rise of African literature chiefly coincided with the phase of modernism in literature, African writers of the current millennium have so artistically brought into this period

the tinge of Africanness in their works by embodying what had hitherto been seen almost by all as parallel forms of drama in a single text. Hence the name modern African drama which can always be distinguished from the *other*. To this end, the convention lies not so much in the hand of the critic as in that of the artist. But it is the critic who determines this convention, for it is his duty to explain what the author has done, interpret it, and announce the emergence of the work to the reading public.

In the scholarship of dramatic forms and from what we see in the text of our study, it is evident that the tragic features have so much intermingled with those of comedy that a clear borderline between the two appears difficult. In support of this, Akwanya writes that 'problems may be encountered with comedy of humour, where the everyday life of the character turns out to be a maze, the situation complicating the harder he struggles to release himself' (52). This same question of the character's situation getting more complicated as he tries harder is what many point out as an undeniable feature of tragedy. Neither is what we have discussed

the same as tragicomedy, which many hold to relate a story that either starts happily to end on a sad note or vice versa. If this is anything to go by, it may portend dragging us back to Aristotle's idea of end-cause, because, for him, 'the end is the chief thing of all' (11). But studies on tragedy have come to agree that Aristotle's end-cause analysis does not hold much in our understanding of the genres of drama (Karl Jaspers 1969, Sewall 1980 and Akwanya 2014). Again many critics simply recognise that there are two forms, disregarding tragicomedy completely. To that end, therefore, tragicomedy, in whatever sense it is explained, falls short of the idea that this study has explored.

For Frye, this work remains 'an inexhaustible source of new critical discovery' (22) among the critics, an aporia which cannot be pinned down to any single interpretation. In the essay, we have attempted the two possibilities of interpreting *Prof. Zemzi's Last Rehearsal*; first, as a tragedy; then as a comedy. This reading is only guaranteed by the text whose ambiguity makes for its plurality of genres.

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