

International Journal of Arts and Humanities (IJAH) Ethiopia

Vol. 7 (4), S/No 27, SEPTEMBER, 2018: 17-26
ISSN: 2225-8590 (Print) ISSN 2227-5452 (Online)
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4314/ijah.v7i4.2>

Decolonize or Else – Negotiating Decolonization through Popular Theatre

Udengwu, Ngozi

Dept of Theatre and Film Studies
University of Nigeria, Nsukka.
Phone: +234 803 471 5635
E-mail: Ngozi.udengwu@unn.edu.ng

Abstract

This study explored the role of audience in African performance to discover the relationship between the popular theatre artist and his audience and how that relationship can be exploited in the process of decolonizing and re-Africanizing the theatre, to arrive at dramatic performances that are closer home to African cultural needs. The study took the continued call for decolonization as a point of departure to determine the difficulty a literary artist faces in realizing this goal, as well as to call attention to the potential of participative audience in realizing that goal. The power of the audience to influence and impact the performance is often taken for granted and glossed over in theatre discourses, but it is given a focus in this work because of the perceived vital role audience can play in decolonizing African theatre. Two performances – *Ejilarin* by Ayokola Arishekola and *The Trumpet Parable* by Chimalum Nwankwo – are used in this study to critically evaluate the status of the theatre audience. While the two plays studied here provide a glimpse into both popular audience and elite drama audience, the focus is on the former. Data for this study were based largely on participation and oral interview.

Key Words: Active Audience; participation; Performer/Audience relationship; decolonization; popular theatre

Introduction

The rhetoric on decolonization is as old as colonization. It took the form of objections to what was considered exploitation and plundering of indigenous people's land and resources, to resistance to and rejection of colonial rule and agitation for independence. The struggle lasted for decades during which a lot of lives were lost, properties destroyed, all kinds of atrocities were committed against anti-colonial agitators. In the end, the purpose was achieved when the colonized nations, one after the other, won their independence from colonial rule. Political independence implies self-rule. But then the harm has been done and nothing, it seems, will ever be the same. The European imperialists left after granting independence to their erstwhile colonies (or did they really) leaving behind a colonial mentality that proves more devastating than the colonialism. Decades after independence the decolonized countries are at a loss how to deal with the effect of colonization. What is the meaning of independence and what have the decolonized countries done with it? Does this mean that the countries were granted

independence before they were ready for self-rule? Who is the current call for decolonization addressing? What should be decolonized, how, and who should do it?

This renewed clarion call to decolonize calls for a deeper insight into decolonization and independence. Contrary to widely held opinion, independence does not necessarily translate to decolonization; rather it marks the beginning of the decolonization process. The end is decolonization which entails, not only political or physical, but also and more importantly, a mental and psychological disengagement from foreign dictates and influences, and the reinstatement of indigenous values. It then implies that decolonization is not the duty of a colonizer to the colonized, rather it is a duty which the colonized owes to himself. In other words, decolonization is not the duty of Europe to Africa, rather it is a duty which Africa owes itself. They have granted the independence meaning that they no longer control or pilot the affairs of the colonies. On the other hand, the colonies have won their independence, meaning they are free to govern themselves, manage their resources and develop their nations without interference from outside powers.

Scholars have since discovered that mental and psychological decolonization is even more important than the physical one. Hence these thinkers are calling for the decolonization of all aspects of life including the decolonization of the African mind (Ngugi wa Thiong'o, 1986; Chinweizu, 1987; Rianna Oelofsen, 2015), decolonization of the stage (Robert Eric Livingston 1995; Christopher Balme 1999); decolonization of literature (Chinweizu et al 1980; Marié Coetzee, 2017); decolonization of Indian theatre (Bishun Kumar 2013, Shiva Chaudhary 2016); decolonization of the tragic genre (Christopher Anyoku 2012; Asuamah Adede-Yeboah and Edward Owusu, 2013); decolonization of methodologies (Linda Tuhiwai Smith 1999). Other aspects of life which scholars in various fields have marked for decolonization include education, language, fashion, architecture, economic system, the system of governance, religion, and so on. The psychological imprint left behind by colonialism has made a mockery of the hard-won political independence because, as scholars have discovered, the so-called independent countries cannot stop being dependent on their former colonizers. Can a nation which is still willingly dependent on her former colonizers be appropriately described as a decolonized sovereignty? Not to forget that all the postcolonial scholars who are campaigning for decolonization are themselves products and accessories of colonialism. Words are cheap. At this point in this unending search for self-identity, it is time to get proactive and committed. Theoretically, the point has been made. What remains is an action plan. Action is the fifth of the five processes of decolonization which Poka Laenui (2000) discusses in his work, "Processes of Decolonization". The five phases of decolonization – Discovery and Recovery, mourning, Dreaming, Commitment, and Action – are meant to counteract the five phases of colonization. He declares, "The responsive action is one for survival. The action called for in the fifth phase of decolonization is not a reactive but a proactive step taken based on the consensus of the people" (p. 158). His insistence that whatever action is taken in the process of decolonization must be responsive to the choice of the colonized people, is particularly relevant to the present paper that focuses on the role of audience in the decolonization of African theatre and performance. Where and how do we begin this process of decolonization? A lot of proposals have been put up, and a lot of experiments have been carried out to decolonize aspects of life. Apparently, none has worked hence the louder the call to decolonize.

This paper looked at some performances that suggest that decolonization rests with the people, the theatre audiences, the much neglected and suppressed part of theatrical expressions. It looks at the role of the audience in a performance beyond acting as consumers of a performance product. The focus is on the modern popular theatre in which the audience is an active and participatory one. African theatre is known for its active audience, a practice that was roundly scorned by elite dramatists who were eager to display their Western training, and project the superiority of modern ideas over primitive indigenous ones. African theatre audience is a participatory one who feels free to pass comments and sometimes money at the performers. They also join the performers in singing and dancing. Singing and dancing

audiences are often associated with the concert parties of West Africa, but it is a normal phenomenon in traditional African performances because they are mostly communal art imbedded in the cultural norms of the people. It is an accepted performance norm for the audience to get involved one way or the other, with the performance. Audience participation is often taken for granted to entail applauding the performer and getting influenced by the content of the performance. It is however, interesting to know that the popular audience can go as far as to force the dramatist to change his story, especially one that does not correspond to their moral values and world view. The dramatists in this case have no choice than to oblige the wish of their audience. A production of Chimalum Nwankwo's play titled *The Trumpet Parable* is here used as a launchpad into a study of the popular theatre audience, and its influence on popular dramatists. The study focuses on primary sources based on experiences of such modern popular theatre practitioners as Hubert Ogunde's performance of *King Solomon* in Ghana; Kola Ogunmola's performance of his tragic play, *Human Confidence* as well as his attempt to remove the Opening Glee from his performances; Ishola Ogunsola's preference for comedy, and Ayox Arishekola's performance of his tragic play, *Ejilarin*. All these men are icons of the modern Yoruba popular travelling theatre. The role which audiences played in these productions is a pointer to the major role audiences can play towards the process of decolonizing the theatre. By extension, it suggests that in the larger society the process of decolonization will not succeed without the indigenous people. In popular theatre these indigenous people are represented by the audience.

In yet another of his writings addressing cultural dependency, Chinweizu (1987) explained the meaning of the word decolonization and what decolonizing the African mind entails, saying

The central objective in decolonizing the African mind is to overthrow the authority which alien traditions exercise over the African. This, demands dismantling the white supremacist beliefs, and the structures which uphold them, in every area of African life. It must be stressed, however, that decolonization does not mean ignorance of foreign traditions; it simply means denial of their authority and withdrawing of allegiance from them.

Chinweizu is implying that until the mind is decolonized, political independence cannot translate to self-rule, nor will it solve the problem of identity. His view hinges on the fact that African writers are aping westerners thereby demonstrating the superiority of the west over Africa. In the end, what is called African writing has little or no Africanness about it, because, as Kohn and McBride (2011, 5) concur, "the postcolonial state was also structured by colonial idea and institutions that were designed to enforce subordination and exploitation." It is not only that the works are written in foreign languages – English, French, Arabic, and the rest of them; they also adopt western theories, creative techniques, and critical standards that are sometimes opposed to African worldview and values. Bishun Kumar agrees with Chinweizu's definition when he states,

Decolonization, as postcolonial studies, is a paradigm shift from colonial dominance to the freedom of the natives, from subordination to co-ordination, from suppression to expression, from the imposition of language and culture to one's own choice, from surrogate Englishman to indigenous man, from forced civilization to ethnic culture (p. 146).

A long-term advocate of decolonization, Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1986) observed that language is the greatest agent of imperialism and urges African writers to revert to writing in their mother tongue to reconnect with their roots from which they are daily alienated through the continued use of foreign imperialist languages. Thiong'o sets the example when he abandoned English language and picked up his mother tongue, Kikuyu as his language of artistic and critical expression. His switch to Kikuyu is a bold step for a world icon of literature now opting for the risk of falling into obscurity. This is a huge sacrifice on the part of a writer who had enjoyed global readership. Now that he is writing in Kikuyu

language, he has suddenly dropped into obscurity and scholars who have been following and documenting his writing style and philosophy would have difficulty doing that. It is understandable if more writers fail to follow his lead.

Smith (1991) took the campaign to a new level with her book titled *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. A leading theorist on decolonization of Maori in New Zealand, knowledge as it is constituted is inadequate because the research methodological apparatuses used to administer the research were parochial and unfavourable to the indigenous people, he declares that,

imperialism has been perpetuated through the ways in which knowledge about indigenous peoples was collected, classified and then represented in various ways back to the West, and then, through the eyes of the West, back to those who have been colonized (p.1).

This is the core of the whole argument. The former colonies are having identity problems because the one they are wearing was constructed by imperialist powers. It is not authentic, genuine or even real.

This proposes a research methodology that is tailored to the needs and exigencies of the indigenous people as well as utilizing local materials and standards, rather than the Western oriented research method that eschews local ideas. Indigenous knowledge is being proposed here.

Kumar (2013) attributed the gains of decolonization of Indian theatre to many folds including translations of English plays into Indian languages and vice versa, performing Indian plays abroad, replacing Western theatre theories with Indian's, dethroning of Aristotle's *Poetics* with *Natyashastra*, and so on. Indigenous plays are playing a significant role to decolonize the colonial dramatic theories. He reveals the nature of the decolonized Indian theatre as one that combines both Western and Indian theatre elements. This corroborates Balme, and Adam (2012) finding that the best that can be achieved with decolonization is a hybrid or syncretic theatre, pointing to the elusiveness of a total decolonization. This stance seems to cast shadows over the seeming extreme posture of Chinweizu, Thiong'O and the other like minds.

No doubt, theatre by its nature as a communal and an emotive art has always proved effective in mobilizing masses to achieve a desired change. It is on this promise that this paper examines the role of the audience in theatre. In particular, the paper examines the popular theatre audience as a significant cultural embodiment through which to begin the process of decolonizing African drama and theatre.

Audience in Search of meaning

As an undergraduate in the University, this writer played the character called "Woman" in a performance of Chimalum Nwankwo's play *The Trumpet Parable*, a very powerful play that demonstrates how difficult it is to fight the powers that be. ABIC, the publisher of the play, gives this description,

This is partly a play about leadership and its demands and responsibilities. It also looks at the burden of individual existence from a deeper level. This unusual play explores various dramatic techniques from the primitive to the most modern.

The cast and crew were satisfied with themselves for putting up such a powerful performance with its powerful language; a wide range of costumes; intimidating blasts of martial music, loud bursts of the trumpet, accompanied by the crazy flickering of the stage lights that announces the approach of the much-feared Inspector of Forests, and sends the poor masses scampering to take cover; human dragons and dogs; upper-class partygoers that appear oblivious of the level of squalor they pass on their way up to the party with the skygod. At the end of the performance, we took our bows as the audience applauded in their usual manner. What happened next makes one wonder at the gap between the literary drama

and its audience. A couple walked up to me and congratulated me for what they called wonderful performance, mentioning, particularly, my lengthy jaw-breaking speech, and how flabbergasted they were watching me do that without missing a rhythm. The woman then asked me “but what was it all about?” This is why literary dramas are performed mainly in the universities, and why they will never enjoy as much popularity as the popular theatre. They are too Western-oriented, and ideologically driven for the popular audience to empathize with. For now, they desire to decolonize their theatre. African literary dramatists could learn one or two tricks from the popular theatre’s relationship with its audience and make the content and style of their plays more indigenous and people-centric. Popular theatre audience impulsively participates in the actions going on the stage because they are quite familiar with the issues being portrayed and the performers adhere to the cultural norms and values of the audience, expressed in the language that is accessible to them. They are not thoroughly entertained and left to wonder what it was all about.

The Trumpet Parable represents the power dynamics between the colonial rulers and the indigenes of the colonized communities, and the rise of sons of the land to fight the injustices of the colonialists and secure the much-needed independence for their people. In the play, the Sky god (the colonial ruler represented by a character named Inspect of Forests) seizes the rain stone and even though there is a great draught in the land and the people are dying of hunger and others losing their minds, the Sky god will not release the rain stone to soften the land for the people to cultivate the land for food. He is Sky god because he lives in the sky, so far away from the people. The stage is designed as a storey building with the colonial ruler occupying the upper part and the subjects occupying the ground level. The only set piece on stage is a staircase leading up to the Sky god. Human dragons man the staircase so that it is impossible for an uninvited guest to climb the steps. “Our Son” is the character who undertakes the journey to the sky god to get the stone. However, when he returns his people feel betrayed for not only does he not bring the rain stone, his language also mellows, unlike the fiery language that gave them hope when he left on the mission. To cap it all, he returns dressed in suit instead of the loin cloth he has gone with. He has obviously gone to fulfil himself and when Teacher, his mentor confronts him with this fact he replies that if he fulfils himself, he fulfils his people. The audience obviously enjoyed the big grammar, the hi-tech displays, but part of them were not able to empathize with the story. There is need, therefore, “to resist the habitual hierarchies of dynamic artist over the passive audience” (Bottoms, 2011: 390). To do this we turn to the popular theatre whose audience chose to speak rather than be just “a listening audience” (Goode 2011).

Power of the Audience in the Professional Popular Travelling Theatre

Audience/performer rapport is one of the characteristics of African performances which the modern popular travelling theatre has retained, and which literary dramatists try to emulate with little success. In traditional and the modern popular travelling theatres, the audience is always an active one in the sense that they feel free to sing popular tunes along with the performers, dance, and throw comments at the performers about the story and action on stage. They are not the controlled passive audiences of the literary theatre.

The modern popular travelling theatre was very popular in the 1940s through the 1980s, almost as popular as the traditional festival performances. But for the gate taking which limited attendance it could have been more popular than the traditional festivals considering that though everybody watches the traditional forms, those forms only occur once or a few times a year. On the other hand, the professional travelling theatre was a daily occurrence. The sheer size of the popular theatre audience, the participatory characteristics, its deep sense of cultural norms, makes it a site for indigenous knowledge. The dramatist can experiment all he wants with foreign dramatic forms, but the popular audience helps in shaping the performance to reflect indigenous values and taste.

In 1970, the Department of Theatre Arts of the University of Ibadan in collaboration with the Institute of African Studies of the University organized a Forum and Exhibition to mark twenty-five years of what was termed the 'Yoruba Operatic Theatre Movement' (Adedeji and Ekwuazi 1998: 80). At the forum, the artists of that theatre movement were given the floor to speak about their experiences with their work. Hubert Ogunde, the greatest and the pioneer of the professional Yoruba popular travelling theatre, who is also known as the father of modern theatre in Nigeria spoke first, and his speech demonstrates the symbiotic relationship between a popular theatre artist and his audience. He states,

So, to me it appears the audience or rather the society dictates what they like to see. It appears they direct us not we are directing the society; because what we want may not necessarily be what the people want (Adedeji and Ekwuazi, 1998, 85).

Ogunde drew this lesson after his performance of *King Solomon*, which was very popular with Nigerian audiences, was taken on a tour of Ghana in 1947. The tour which lasted three months left Ogunde bankrupt. The Ghana audience did not enjoy the performance because it was performed in the Yoruba language which they did not understand and with Yoruba drumming which they were not familiar with. It was a historical failure for the king of the stage whose name was synonymous with staging success, a household name back in Nigeria. The news of the failure was a media frenzy, understandably. It is not the failure of *King Solomon* in Ghana that is the concern of this paper but why the performance failed and, more importantly, what the artist did next. With his trained sensibility as the researcher he was, Ogunde investigated and found out what Ghana audience wanted. The following year, 1948, he went back to Ghana with a performance tailored to the taste of Ghanaian audience, now with a play titled *Swing the Jazz*, which turned out to be successful. His research on Ghana audience revealed that

They want something more furious, something (like jazz, playing a jumping comedy). Yes I came back, rearranged – that was what started my using saxophone, trumpets, musical instruments in my shows.

It is interesting to note that this incident took place the same year Ogunde came back from Britain where he had gone to learn British staging techniques and had come back with stage lighting equipment and stage effects. He probably believed that the European touch would earn him extra popularity. On the contrary, he got a shock of his life when his performance failed to impress the Ghanaian audience. In the end, it is all about what the people want, what the people desire.

His audience study did not end with Ghana. He also met failure in Ivory Coast in 1951, though the failure was not as monumental as his Ghana experience. From further audience study, he discovered that audiences differ, for example, it was not what appeals to Yoruba audiences that appealed to his audiences in Eastern Nigeria.

Other practitioners had narrated their experiences when they were confronted by their audience about aspects of their performance that were inaccurate or did not correspond with their norm of entertainment. Kola Ogunmola, Isola Ogunsola, and Ayox Arishekola were some of the artists who learned firsthand the opinion of their audiences toward the tragic form. Africans do not like tragic re-enactments for reasons which some people, will dismiss as superstitious. Again, the affinity between the people and their deities is such that tragedy has no place in African cosmology, not when such experiences can be averted through prescribed appropriate sacrifices. Below are evidences that Africans abhor the tragic genre.

When Kola Ogunmola was asked why he preferred to stage comedies, he replied that he had tried producing tragedies in the past. He cited one of his plays, *Human Confidence* as an example, in which a man loves his wife so much that he rejected his family to be with her. When eventually the uncertainty of life hits and the wife leaves him, the man dies of heartbreak. His audience went away very sad. But when he gave them comedy, they were happy.

Isola Ogunsola is also quoted as saying that personally, he preferred tragedy, but for our audiences, no matter how tragic a play is, there must be some comic elements within it... They preferred the tragic ending to be softened; they want something to make them hopeful, to brighten them up before they leave. (qtd in Jeyifo, 1984, pp. 119 – 120).

The artist did mention that his university audiences liked the tragedies. Tragic dramas are usually elevated both in content and production technique, but there is hardly a way to determine whether university audiences agree with it or not since they haven't the liberty to comment as freely as their popular counterparts. Again, that they do not complain does not translate to preference. More research needs to be done to ascertain whether university audiences prefer tragic drama to, say melodrama or tragic-comedy. The incident narrated above with regards to *The Trumpet Parable* performance cannot be taken as an isolated case. It is possible that the university audience share the same sensibility as the popular but perhaps have no option than to keep up the façade of civility and the superior air.

In the next story the audience virtually forced a dramatist to rewrite his play and he had no choice than to do what his audience demanded. This is the story of Ayox Arishekola and his audience. Ayox was popular for adapting Indian cultural and performance elements in his theatre. His performances had the sound and sights that were associated only with Hindi films and music. His subject of interest was love, unlike his peers who were famous for performing stories based on folklore (Kola Ogunmola's *The Palmwine-Drinkard*, history (Duro Ladipo's *Oba Koso*), politics (Ogunde's *Yoruba Ronu*), and social issues (Oyin Adejobi's *Orogun Adedigba*). Apart from love stories, which were not the staple of theatre in Nigeria at the time but rather characteristic of Indian performances, Indian costumes, and makeup, as well as tunes, were used to complete the Indianness of his performances. Most of his plays were cast in this Indian mode since the start of his theatre troupe in the early 1950s. The first of his plays cast in Indianmode was *Ijinle Ife* (deep love). Others include *Tanimola* (Who Knows Tomorrow), and *Ejilarin* (Resemblance). Indian image in Ayox theatre was a reflection of the arrival of Hindi films and music into Nigeria and the instant connection which Nigerians had with them. Indian love stories, as well as their colourful costumes, singing, and music, were appealing to Nigerians. Soon as Indian films arrived in Nigeria, brought by some Lebanese exhibitors in early 1950s, Western films instantly fell out of favour. The love for Indian performances was thus transferred to Ayox performances that had the Indian flavour. But then Ayox soon learned that it is not everything about Indian performance that is welcomed. This was demonstrated with the play *Ejilarin* (resemblance) in which the audience opposed the tragic ending, and the dramatist had no option than to comply.

Ejilarin is the story of two lovers who got married. However, it becomes clear that this love is doomed. It starts shortly after their wedding when the groom, who is a commercial bus driver, is sent on a trip by his boss. The man fails to come back, and it is soon reported that he has been involved in an auto crash and died. The bride is not able to handle the trauma for she feels there is no life for her without her husband. She takes poison and dies. The audience cried foul. They did not see the justification for the couple to die. This predicts what their opinion of such western tragedy as William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* will likely be. *Ejilarin* audience told Ayox that the tragedy that befalls the bride and groom in that story is not deserved. All they have done is to love each other deeply. Why should such sincere love end in such a catastrophic manner? In Indian love films, we often find such deep love end in death. But in the end the couple are often shown to reunite in heaven showing they are inseparable, and their love is an undying one and that life continues in spirit world. However, in African tragic sense, it is believed that tragedy can be reversed through divination (Adade-Yeboah and Owusu, 2013, 37). It takes the audience to remind the dramatist that African tragic sense is different from the Hellenic one (Oyin Ogunba, qt in Christopher Anyoku, 2012: 73). It is from the expressive audiences that a dramatist can learn indigenous sensibility and worldview in order to reflect as much of it as possible.

Kola Ogunmola, again, was chastised by his audience for his structural adjustment that undermined an important indigenous performance element. One traditional performance element which was retained by all the modern performing troupes was the entrance entertainment called Ijuba in Yoruba, and Opening Glee in English. When theatre scholars became interested in the work of the travelling theatre, they thought they might modernize the theatre form to conform with the literary drama of Western orientation. The artists they experimented with included Kola Ogunmola. He was invited to improve his skills at the School of Drama of the University of Ibadan. That relationship he had with the university helped to elevate him to international acclaim. He even received a Rockefeller Award to produce his blockbuster *The Palmwine-Drinkard*, an adaptation of Emos Tutuola's novel of that title.

To work in the university and with university intellectuals meant that he would do away with the traditional tone of his performances and adopt more Western paradigms. In an interview, Ogunmola narrated how he was advised to do away with Opening Glee when he worked in the university. He was told that the style was outmoded. Thus, he performed for the university audience without the opening glee. However, he had a rude awakening when he came back to his popular audience without that performance piece. He had a packed hall as usual, but that was the first night. The second night he performed to a near empty house. He later understood why and quickly reinstated the Opening Glee and that did the magic of bringing back his fans. Because of that experience, he swore to give his audiences what they desire.

It is important to note that all the audience interventions narrated above involve popular audience's disapproval of certain foreign performance influences and the insistence on the dramatists reinstating African aesthetic values and moral sense. Such interventions from the audience is a lifeline for the process of decolonization and re-Africanization of African theatre. Therefore, the audience is indispensable in the decolonization programme. The audience is not as interested as the dramatist in foreign models of theatre, they appreciate homespun aesthetic idioms. This makes it a repository of indigenous knowledge needed to decolonize African theatre. It is important to observe that the audiences studied above are not averse to foreign models per se. They loved Ayox performances because of the Indian elements. On the other hand, they rejected the dramatist's experiment with the tragic genre due to the obvious fact of opposing tragic sense. The audience clearly had a different view on tragedy and they stated same in their protest. They also opposed the elimination of the performance structure of the opening glee which they considered very germane to home grown theatre performance. What this shows is that the audience consider some changes and innovations as unoffensive or even vital, especially if they are ephemeral, while they consider others too important to be toyed with.

The popular theatre audience is not just a consumer of a product or a morale booster for the actors, it is also a major stakeholder and customer who stakes his time and money to be entertained and enlightened. It, therefore, exercises its right to protest the content or form of a performance that is inappropriate and indecorous with its socio-cultural worldview or its aesthetic expectations. To show who is the boss, it punishes the performer by boycotting his productions, which is the ultimate punishment since there can be no theatre without the audience. It is understandable why Ogunde, Ogunmola, Arishekola studied above had to satisfy the desire of their audience. This brings us to the most important role of the popular theatre audience as an apparatus for the process of decolonization of African theatre or any other indigenous theatres that desire to sustain its cultural identity. They represent pure public opinion, genuine and unpolluted by alien cultural trends. They are "productive and emancipated spectator(s)" (Susan Bennet, 2011, p. 4).

On the other hand, the passive audience of the literary drama hasn't the freedom which its popular counterpart has and so is less equipped to influence the dramatist. The pathetic condition of passive audience is captured in Tim Crouch's award-winning play *The Author* where the audience is poorly represented and is given no opportunity to protest. The line state,

But I often think – I think – I think that sometimes the most fantastical – the most made up thing in the theatre is us! don't you, - ? I saw a play last year and i remember thinking, 'that writer has imagined me'. I've been imagined! Poorly imagined! The audience has been badly written!

We are all going to have to pretend ourselves! Do you know that feeling, - ?

And the actors just go on and on and on, don't they?

About the state of the world or why they can't get laid. ... And we just let them, don't we? No one ever asks them to stop, do they?

Conclusion

The continued call for decolonization is given a practical consideration in the preceding pages, with attention on the popular theatre. The paper demonstrates that theatre audience has the power and the indigenous knowledge which is needed to resuscitate genuine culturally appropriate performances that are reflective of the historically accurate worldview of the people, rather than force-feeding the locals with alien values and systems that make them outsiders in their own home. Through the story of The Trumpet Parable production, it becomes apparent that literary drama, which is often hinged on Western performance paradigms and ideologies, may be mesmerizing to the locals but may not necessarily impact them socio-culturally. It, therefore, marginalizes the audience. On the other hand, an active and participatory audience always asserts its choices and preferences on the dramatist and these preferences are hinged on cultural literacy. As demonstrated in the attitude of the popular theatre audiences toward tragedy on stage, a search for culturally appropriate performance practices should pay close attention to the audience genuine concerns.

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