

EM FOCO

**POST-COLONIALISM AND  
PERFORMANCE: POLITICAL,  
CULTURAL AND PEDAGOGIC  
LEGACIES AND CONSTRAINTS**

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Post-colonialism and performance: political, cultural and pedagogic legacies and constraints.

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## RESUMO

A maioria das sociedades pós-coloniais continuam a suportar as cicatrizes do colonialismo europeu em seus domínios culturais, políticos e pedagógicos. Relacionamentos neocolonialistas com seus antigos colonizadores continuam a afetar as condições históricas e materiais de cada nação-estado pós-colonial na medida em que molda a sinergia entre os sistemas culturais de indígenas e estrangeiros e como as sociedades pós coloniais modelam seus universos. Este ensaio olha amplamente para o estado do pós-colonialismo no século XXI, argumenta que embora haja oportunidades, a performance pós-colonial ainda está sujeita a restrições políticas, culturais e pedagógicas.

## PALAVRAS CHAVES:

Pós-colonialismo.  
Performance Pós-colonial.  
Cultura. Educação.

## ABSTRACT

*Most postcolonial societies continue to bear the scars of European colonialism in their sociocultural, political and pedagogic domains. Neo-colonialist relationships with their erstwhile colonisers continue to affect the historical and material conditions of every postcolonial nation-state to the extent of shaping the synergy between indigenous and foreign cultural systems and how postcolonial societies model their new universes. This essay looks broadly at the state of post-colonialism in the 21st century, it argues that while there are opportunities, postcolonial performance is still subject to Political, Cultural and Pedagogic constraints.*

## KEY WORDS:

*Post-colonialism. Post-colonial Performance. Culture. Education.*



## INTRODUCTION

**COLONIALISM** was a hydra-headed invasive misadventure that presented itself in many forms and guises globally, it generally mutated with local conditions in order to locate itself firmly in the histories, presents and futures of its victims. The onset of colonialism in various geographical locations is difficult to pin down with any degree of certainty. Depending on the version of history and reason for recall and as basis for postcolonial criticism, colonialism in Africa, Asia and the Americas often started as unofficial benign incursions masquerading as one or all of several varieties of trading and so-called civilising missions, as foreign religious activities and quest for economic dominance backed up by false treaties. These benign conditions later dove-tailed smoothly in the lived experiences of every colonised society with the official versions characterised by cultural violence, economic exploitation, and hegemonic relations, all ultimately leading to the degradation and disruptions of local indigenous secular and sacral order.

In Africa for instance, it started with the first chance arrival of the European maritime traders in the 15th century in what was then known to Europeans as the coastlands of West Africa before taking a distinctively hostile turn with the scramble for and partition of Africa. From 1870 when less than ten percent (10%) of the continent was in direct control of Europe, European colonialism expanded rapidly through the 1880s and to 1900 when Europe's imperialist agenda and aggression,

diplomatic pressures, expanding trade and accelerated identification and exploitation of local economic resources, military invasions, and broken treaties led to the eventual conquest and colonisation of more than ninety percent (90%) and vast sections of Africa, the exceptions being Liberia, the colony of freed slaves from North America, Ethiopia (then known as Abyssinia and present-day Somalia).

European colonisation of the Americas started in 1492 when a Spanish trading expedition led by the Italian and Genoese explorer, Columbus' search for a new trade route to India and the Far East 'discovered' a so-called 'New World' after landing accidentally and setting up the first European settlement in the Americas in Taino in the northern part of Hispaniola. This eventually led to more expeditions by Columbus and incursions into the hinterland and eventual colonisation of Bahamas and other West Indian/Caribbean islands by different European nations including Cuba and Puerto Rico.

On the back of Columbus' expeditions, the treaty of Tordesillas signed between Spain and Portugal in 1494 which divided the world outside Europe into Castilian (Spanish) and Portuguese hemispheres for exclusive territorial conquest and colonisation domination opened the Americas to European presence brought Portugal into present-day Brazil when in April 1500, Portuguese settlers arrived on the shores of Rio Buranhém in Bahia under the direction of Pedro Alvares Cabral. This move was reinforced in April 1529 by the Treaty of Zaragoza which set out the antemeridian or geographical locations in then mariner's maps, making it possible for other European nations to foray for territories outside Europe.

The European colonisation of India and Asia was not too different for that of Africa and the Americas, it being propelled in the early 16th century by the establishment of many trading outposts by the Portuguese along west coast India and former Ceylon, the present-day Sri Lanka. This spurred on other European powers to the point that from the 17<sup>th</sup> to early 18<sup>th</sup> century long-established Indian civilisations and democracies were riddled and weakened by local dynasties rivalries and internal strife fostered by rival European nations (especially Britain, France, the Dutch, Denmark and Norway) squabbling for holdings and economic exploitation of the rich and vast Indian sub-continent. This essay explores the extents to which the history and development of post-colonial performance and performance-making

could venture beyond negotiating the political, cultural and historical domain of Postcolonialism to how an understanding of its intertwined relationship with conditions in the postcolony and globalism make it a new and re-imagined challenge for performance makers and theorist to seek for ways of keeping it current in educational, political, social and cultural discourses.



## POST-COLONIALISM: A NEW OVERVIEW AND PROBLEMATIC LEGACY

There is no doubting that European imperialist misadventure to other parts of the globe consisting of different cultures, civilisations and histories was founded entirely on an imperialist agenda and specifically on economic, political, and social considerations. These missions could only survive on the destruction of their local counterparts and the conscious denial, structured dismantling and erasure of local cultures and histories and their re-writing through European cultural filters and tropes that were all about promoting European civilisation, interests and systems as the only norms against which every non-European conventions sociocultural systems cultures could only be seen through an *other* lens. While each colonised society and culture deployed various resistance strategies against European colonisation and imposition of foreign systems and cultures on their countries, like colonialism itself whose manifestations depended on the wishes of the colonising European nation, the resulting anticolonial moves that also date back to the first disparate and mainly un-recorded acts of resistance, were also culture and location specific and depended not on Europe alone, but on how the colonised societies viewed their past and present and what they wanted for the futures that the colonising powers were busily shaping for themselves.

Post-colonialism is thus, a multifaced condition with an even much more variegated history and effects across the globe. While it is challenging and occasionally ambivalent to speak or write about the common factors and features of

postcolony with absolute objectivity, post-colonialism is essentially a multi-local condition founded on and rooted in a system of differences, binaries and multiple reconstructions. The effects of these binaries and constructs are very obvious, in constant flux and manifest variously in cultural, social, economic and epistemological terrains in formerly colonised societies. Each postcolony is different, is simultaneously local and glocal in its experiences and context and for which reasons I use the term, *glocal* to mean the sociocultural consciousness and state borne out of colonialism and one which leads to “the dialectic between the local and the global” (BUONANNO; SAMS; SCHLOTE, 2011, p. 1) or a “glocal historiography” (BUONANNO; SAMS; SCHLOTE, 2011, p. 3) consisting of experiences of different cultures. Postcolony in this essay refers to the lived experience and conditions that come with colonialism. In other words, the postcolonial condition is a composite of differences across existential spheres and to my mind, what Achille Mbembe describes variously in *On the Postcolony* (2001) and in an interview with Christian Hoeller, editor of *Quarterly art/theory/cultural studies* journal as “... as a timespace characterized [sic] by proliferation and multiplicity....a temporal formation, the postcolony is definitely an era of dispersed entanglements, the unity of which is produced out of differences. From a spatial point of view, it is an overlapping of different, intersected and entwined threads in tension with one another...” <https://www.laits.utexas.edu/africa/ads/1528.html>

Among the many forces that shape various postcolonies and *post-colonialisms* as socio-political constructs and as a narrative and critical trope, are the selfish single-minded imposition of *the foreign* on *the local* and the consequent disruption of cultural histories and logical development in the colonised, the reason and nature of foreign intrusion and the specific contradictions and subjectivities that make up local responses to colonial, anticolonial and postcolonial interactions. Another and arguably the most damaging in terms of its lasting and corrosive legacy on formerly colonised societies is *how* the resulting disruptions and foreign impositions on the lived experiences and cultures of pre-colonial societies re-drew sociocultural and geographical boundaries, synthesised and forged previously unrelated social and cultural histories into new polities and nations, irrespective of their often glaring differences.

Since it started and was used loosely from the onset of colonialism by political and cultural intelligentsia in colonised societies as a combination of critical, cultural and political strategies for dismantling the insidious legacy of colonialism, the concept of post-colonialism and its associated tropes, practices and normative categories have grown across diverse fields and levels of human interaction from history and archaeology to popular culture and performance, theoretically and practically. It has spawned new ideas, altered as well as reinforced global views on a number of associated terms and counter-discourses such as Orientalism, Self, *Other*, resistance, opposition (SAID, 2006), and brought about a rethinking of what people mean when they use concepts and tropes such as representation, hybridity, syncretism, homogeneity and heterogeneity, *difference* and *othering*, diaspora, neo-colonialism. Broadly-speaking, post-colonialism did not only shape, it has had a direct impact on the development of intercultural, intra-cultural, cross-cultural, multicultural and transcultural performances and tropes.

Rather than bridge the gap between former coloniser and former colonised peoples and societies, it has sharpened distinctions and differences. It has responded and adjusted to every exigency that the controllers of global capital and socio-political systems, and their local lackeys in postcolonial nations across the world and race groups have thrown up. Its impacts in shaping the framing and reading of class relations in either of essentially Marxist and socialist terms in postcolonial states have perpetuated if not deepening divisive internal sectional and cultural furrows that were first used by colonialist to divide and stop people from mounting effective oppositions to their presence and impositions and for controlling and enlarging their economic holdings. More importantly, it has been a factor in the re-imagining of relationships, binaries and subjectivities in politics, race and culture relations such as Freedom/oppression, Home/exile, Homogeneity / heterogeneity, Imperialism / Nationalism, Inclusion / marginalisation, Indigenous/ foreign etc. It has underpinned re-imaginings and multiple readings of critical tropes and facilities and of ideological and political constructs as among them being Feminism, Gender relations and imbalance, Revisionism, Rewritings, Objectification, *Tricontinentalism* (WISKER, 2007), us-them, foreign and local, apartheid, anti-colonialism, Commonwealth, Afrocentrism, Eurocentrism, Decolonisation, Pan-Africanism, Pan-Arabism, Resistance.

What is not in doubt however, is the fact that post-colonialism marks the end of a colonialist enterprise and foreign incursion from one cultural topography to another and the imposition of a foreign sociocultural consciousness on a place and people with different systems and worldviews. Although its' original primary purpose from the very beginning was to reflect on, examine, dismantle, contest and interrogate the many explanations and reasons that historians, cultural anthropologists, sociological and political theorists have advanced for the end and effects of colonialism, post-colonialism has moved from an emphasis on the historicisation of precolonial and colonial experience and examination of the actions of the foreign to a critical spotlight on the internal tensions and contradictions that independence and end of colonialism promised but have so far failed to deliver. By focussing simulataneously on both former coloniser and colonised and on the counter-discourses produced by the conditions of the latter, post-colonialism de-stabilises extentialism surrounding history, race and class relations as a cultural construct and acquired doubly significant polyvocality as a critical trope

This polyvocality is not only important in addressing national issues, a lot of new second and later generation performance makers and writers in many postcolonial countries in Africa and Asia such as Esiaba Irobi (*Hangman Also Die*, 1989 and *Nwokedi*, 1991), Wole Soyinka (*King Baabu*, 2002), Stella Oydepo (*A Play That Was Never To Be*, 1998) to mention a few, have resorted to the combination of indigenous and modern metatheatrical performance strategies, postcolonial binaries and disruptions, and postmodernist subjectivities in order to critique social malaise, political corruption, gender nomation and formations and imbalance and other subjects in their plays and countries. Esiaba Irobi went further to challenge conventions surrounding postcolonial theory in his essay, "The Problem with Post-colonial Theory: Re-Theorizing African Performance, Orature and Literature in the Age of Globalization and Diaspora Studies" (2008). Irobi's implied quest for a re-imagining and re-definition of Post-colonialism in African and postcolony terms is far more than a theoretical and radicalist exercise. Such a quest needs to be a main concern and pre-occupation for theorists and practitioners of post-colonial performances but more so for pedagogy, education, culture and development theorists and activists if Post-colonialism is to remain relevant. Here, I mean that the relevance of the post-colonia performance is contingent on capturing and re-invigorating the gains of past and present thoughts on post-colonialms in the



postcolony whilst continually challenging imperialist attempts to consign it to history, to the classroom and to the odd line in metropolitan libraries.

Significantly, Post-colonialism has diversified the domain of theatre and performance, theoretically, practically and strategically but its exploration of the various socio-political and ideological forces contingent upon the relations between many postcolonial societies in Africa, Asia and the Far-East and their former colonial overlords, remains far from convincing. In other words, this presentation is of the view that post-colonialism has achieved notable goals that have combined to make it the radical trope critical trope it is today, among these are the development of post-colonialism as an academically framed critical category and its' assimilation by performance makers and into sociocultural and pedagogic developments of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries.



## POST-COLONIALISM'S CONTENTIOUS SPACE

Like its antecedent discourses (Colonialism and Anti-colonialism), Post-colonialism has always been part of human evolution and history. While it emerged as a socio-political and cultural phenomenon its history and development are far much earlier than the late 19<sup>th</sup> to the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century when many colonised societies in Africa, Asia, the Middle-East and Far-East began their quests for political and economic freedom from their erstwhile colonisers and mostly western European nations. The brief history and overview given above and in the context of this essay do very little to represent or capture any one of the various socio-cultural and ideological terrains and subjectivities that characterise the multifaced concept and field that Post-colonialism has since become and which it continues to track. Despite the postmodernist redacted reading that surround the condition in the 21<sup>st</sup> century it is logical to aver that Post-colonialism has a long history dating back to very ancient human civilisation on earth and well before recorded history, to a time when a human society invaded or

occupied another for a while and then left or was made to leave for any number of reasons. Like colonialism whose effects reach every area of a society's existence, post-colonialism has a very wide berth and reach, a factor that accounts for the spread and appropriation of the concept and its discourse in every areas of the arts, humanities, and social sciences. Post-colonialism does not only manifest itself in various forms, contexts and tropes in the post-contact history of former colonies and the new nations that colonial projects birthed and spawned in especially Africa, Asia, Australia and the Americas, the tentacles, effects, subjectivities, discourse and counter-discourses of post-colonialism are global.

However it became an academic discourse from the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. This was essentially through two main facets, the first being the political activism and writings by mostly people of colonial heritage such as Aime Cesaire, Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Frantz Fanon, Gayatri Spivak, Homi Bhabha, Michel Foucault to name a few. The second avenue through which post-colonialism became established was the activities of social anthropologists, sociologists, politicians, novelists, dramatists, poets and artists of both colonised and colonising /coloniser provenances whose writings and performance activities across all spheres were predicated on three inter-related subjectivities. First, was the need to revive and historicise colonised people's lived and cultural experiences, the second was the logical recognition of colonialism as an affront and an unwelcome invasion of indigenous civilisations, life-styles, cultures and practices by a foreign culture. Thirdly was the appreciation that colonialism and the colonial period were not natural developments in the cultures and polities of the colonised, but a distinctively traumatizing and definable break in the history and cultural trajectory of a colonised society. (TOYNBEE apud JEYIFO, 1996)

Setting pre-17<sup>th</sup> Century Greek, Roman, Carthaginian, Macedonian, Arab and western-European and other world contacts outside the frame of this essay Post-colonialism as a discourse and form of socio-political and cultural engagement remains in my view an ambiguous derivation and conundrum; a continually evolving field and changing concept that is best understood from loosely-defined contexts, each of which addresses the pre-colonial conditions of a society, the nature of the colonising foreign power's colonising project, how the colonised society and culture responded to subsequent foreign impositions and what they

expected with the end of colonial rule and occupation. This is irrespective of whether such expectations and outcomes are achievable or not, realistic or imaginary, nationalistic or revolutionary, conservative or radical, fulfilled or disappointing. The facts that global commerce and neo-colonial relations continue to link many formerly colonised societies and nations to their former colonisers renders post-colonialism very much an existential construct that cannot be separated from the material conditions of peoples and nations. While this has led to many contesting and contentious definitions and readings of the term, there has also been a general misconception of post-colonialism in certain circles. A mis-conceived reading is one that considers or imagines post-colonialism to be a fixed sociocultural state or condition that denotes an end-stage or endgame after which a society or culture, having gained independence from a former colonising country, becomes sealed or is ossified into an immutable state of being.

This kind of reading is far from the reality of post-colonial societies and explains why in *The Empire Writes Back*, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin (eds.) (1989) propose an inclusive and processual definition that brings divergent and contrasting view of post-colonialism under a common relational umbrella. Their definition continues to attract critical attention because in addition to highlighting the ontological roots of post-colonialism, they interrogate the reasons for how and why the term and its various context-derived strategies may be approached from different perspectives. Their definitions draws attention to the nature of post-colonialism and the postcolony as on-going processes thus, negating as well as contesting views of post-colonialism as the fixed, archival state of a people, culture or nation state after colonisation. According to Ashcroft et al. (1989, p. 2), post-colonialism is a continuum for they argue:

We use the term 'post-colonial', however, to cover all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonisation to the present day. This is because there is a continuity of preoccupations throughout the historical process initiated by European imperial aggression.

Stephen Slemon's well-publicised comment goes further by drawing upon the fact that history is a process that links the past, present and future into a continuity

and for which reason I think post-colonialism, especially as a performance construct and trope, should never privilege the past over a society's present or run the risk of sacrificing the present and future, even when celebrating, reviving and historicising the past. According to Slemon (1991, p. 3):

Definitions of the 'post-colonial' of course vary widely, but for me the concept proves most useful not when it is used synonymously with a post-independence historical period in once-colonised nations, but rather when it locates a specifically anti- or *post-colonial discursive* purchase in culture, one which begins in the moment that colonial power inscribes itself onto the body and space of its Others and which continues as an often occulted tradition into the modern theatre of neo-colonialist international relations.

It stands to reason that since the past and the present are related as parts of human-kinds' evolutionary process and spectrum, it is impossible to excise or isolate the present and the future in explorations of the post-colonial and the postcolony. In fact, as Peter Childs and R. J. Patrick Williams (1997) assert in *An Introduction to Post-Colonial Theory*, while post-colonialism may "refer in part to the period after colonialism" (p.1) they recognise the need to problematise the concept and so go on to ask the question that both highlight what post-colonialism has been about and in my view, part of what it ought to be about;

...[A]fter whose colonialism? and after the end of which colonial empire....clearly there has not been just one period of colonialism in the history of the world – indeed, ... a colonising power may itself have once been a colony.... A major contention in post-colonial studies is that the overlapping development of the ensemble of European colonial empires – British, French, Dutch, Spanish, Portuguese, Belgian, Italian, German – from the sixteenth century onwards (but especially in the nineteenth), and their dismantling in the second half of the twentieth century, constitutes an unprecedented phenomenon, and one with global repercussions in the contemporary world, so that one answer to the question 'When is the post-colonial?' is 'Now' (1997, p. 1-2).

On their part, Helen Gilbert and Joanne Tompkins (1996) take a different view and suggest a definition that considers post-colonialism more appropriately as a historical and sociocultural process and one which accommodates the present and future conditions of a formerly colonised society. In their words,

The term [*post-colonialism*] – according to a too-rigid etymology – is frequently misunderstood as a temporal concept, meaning the time after colonialism has ceased, or the time following the politically determined Independence Day on which a country breaks away from its governance by another state. Not a naïve teleological sequence, which supersedes colonialism, *post-colonialism* is, rather, an engagement with, and contestation of, colonialism's discourses, power structures, and social hierarchies. . . . A theory of post-colonialism must, then, respond to more than the merely chronological construction of post-independence, and to more than just the discursive experience of imperialism. (GILBERT; TOMPKINS, 1996, p. 2)

Post-colonialism in performance or performing the postcolony is a modern theatrical trope rooted in the economic colonialism of western European imperial powers of mainly Portugal, Spain, Belgium, France, Britain, Italy, Germany and the kingdom of the Netherlands / Holland that culminated in the 'Scramble for Africa (1874-1914), including of course, British colonisation of vast colonies in Asia. European colonialism was premised on 19<sup>th</sup> century territorial expansions and writings such as Joseph-Ernest Renan's racist diatribe in *La Réforme intellectuelle et morale* (1871) that was predicated on a poorly-judged espousal of the superiority of the white race over others to which he consigned to the roles servitude for differing reasons and contexts. If anything, the links between globalism and neo-imperialist designs and linking of across the globe, the imposition of a foreign socioeconomic construct on non-European societies and the imagined inferiority of colonised peoples and especially cultures of black descent, implicate Joseph-Ernest Renan and Western European states in post-colonialism, contrary to any suggestions that previously colonised societies are now free to do as they please. Perhaps Arun Mukerjee (1990) shines the most critical of spotlights on post-colonialism as a modern ever-evolving construct and on how performers

and performance should address the concept as an on-going debate in the article, "Whose Post-Colonialism and Whose Modernism?" (1990).

In effect, Post-colonialism has not stood still as a fixed construct or like colonialism, been shunted into a forgotten alleyway. Nor has it become a philosophical and theoretical abstraction located within a specific historical period. Its legacies (positive and negative, benign and insidious) run deep in the very substrata of development, governance and pedagogy in postcolonial nation states and very widely in global relations. It has evolved and changed as the world, societies and global relations have changed and in the process. Post-colonialism has become a primary lens and extensive critical framework for interrogating internal relations in postcolonial states where, as in the case of most African polities in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the ruling political-industrial and military elite retain power, cling on to and use the various colonial structures that those who fought for political independence resisted and touted as the first to be eradicated, come independence from European rule.

If it can, how should politics, philosophy, history, economics, culture and education interrogate and negotiate the diverse contours of post-colonialism in the the very troubling and unsettling climate of the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century? What should the focus and locus standi of postcolonial discourse in performance be? Should postcolonial performance for example, remain trapped as an abstract topic in classrooms staged periodically for examinations and periodic festivals and events of which each country has its share or align itself to the original purpose of performance, that being to challenge, examine, and reinvigorate society? Is postcolonial performance, theoretically and practically, capable of or actually highlighting and destabilising the still pervasive legacy of colonial rule? Can it expose the internal decay, corruption, mass poverty, the deprivations and degradations that home-grown political economic actors preside over and use to de-humanise majority of the citizenry in supposedly independent postcolonial nation? Can Post-colonialism speak to a postcolony and to postcolonial conditions globally without echoing or repeating the accusations and narratives of former colonisers against their former territories? The answers to these questions would and do terrify educational administrators, council workers and cultural activists frightened of losing their jobs and commissions by what public uncensored performances on these subjects would unleash. Despite these concerns some

performance-makers are undaunted, but rather emboldened as they adjust and point the lens of post-colonial criticism in-ward in educational, political, social and cultural settings in different postcolonies.



## POLITICAL, CULTURAL AND PEDAGOGIC CONSTRAINTS

In the face of different definitions, a realistic construct for post-colonialism as a discourse and performance form and strategy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is one that factors in historical, cultural, socio-political and economic circumstances that underpin, justify, seek to explain or interrogate colonialism as a project aimed at extending a nation's rule and cultural influence over another territory beyond its legitimate boundaries or what Leela Gandhi (1998) describes as the "West's attempts systematically to cancel or negate the cultural difference and value of the "non-West". Conceptually and in practice post-colonialism evades neat categorisation and should continue to resist simple, un-problematized definitions.

Since "post-colonial" and its contexts, related disciplines and provenances vary widely but is no longer primarily the many references to the conditions and time when former colonies of European empires became politically independent sovereign states, limiting the range and aesthetics of postcolonial performances to such concerns or even aligning itself firmly to the periods and conditions that marked the end of colonial rule is very limiting. The fact is that despite their political independence from former colonisers, colonialism has merely morphed into cleverly disguised bilateral and multilateral relations and has continued in the twin-guises of neo-colonialism and globalisation right from before postcolonial nations gained their so-called independence from erstwhile colonisers. These destabilising and debilitating conditions have always held back and truncated the dreams of independence. They have been growing in complexity to the detriment of postcolonial polities and economies but reached unimaginably unconscionable states in the wake of rapid globalisation of the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries.

Commentators such as Gayatri Spivak (1990), Said, and Achebe among many have argued in various fora that achieving political independence neither solved the problems in former colonised countries nor ushered in the much anticipated changes beyond the local lackeys and well-trained henchmen of former colonial powers taking over the external instruments and paraphernalia of politics from erstwhile colonisers.

These critics argue and rightly so, that although post-colonialism may have ushered what can only be described as a kind of new beginning, it was not necessary the end of colonialism. Little changes have happened since the *new* countries or their re-designation into new polities simply reinforced the coralling of pre-colonial societies in new socio-political configurations as was the case all over Africa and Asia in general. The new nations bought holistically into foreign socio-political models with many of them being lured into socioeconomic projects created by departing colonisers for the continued exploitation of the newly independent countries. In almost every case on record, the immediate post-colonial ruling and military elite did more than sustain semblances and mutations of European rule based on 'divide and rule' and the exploitation of the masses by the new local elites whose actions helped to reproduce and sustain colonialism in the form of neo-colonialism. Unfortunately, because the socio-political, educational and cultural institutions that came with first stage post-colonialism did not dismantle the infrastructure of colonialism, it struggled to shake off the ambiguity surrounding its' definition and strategies in political, pedagogic and cultural discourse in both of post-colonial and former coloniser societies. The single commonality that first-stage post-colonialism shares in postcolony globally is the use of the term to cover all theories, practices and strategies designed to tackle the effects of colonialism right from the start of colonialism and continuing up to today.

While there may be some consensus in postcolonies and former coloniser societies about the remits of the term such as it being an inclusive facility for effecting "the recuperation and reappraisal" of a colonised people's history (CROW; BANFIELD, 1996, p. 61), there is little evidence in practice that post-colonialism has had a huge impact on altering relations between erstwhile coloniser and former colonised or even in generating change and transformation in post-colonial nations. This is just one of the many political and cultural constraints that the form



faces globally. Evidences suggest that while critics such as Lawson are right to describe post-colonialism as a “politically motivated historical-analytical movement that engages with, resists, and seeks to dismantle the effects of colonialism in the material, historical, cultural-political, pedagogical, discursive and textual domains” (LAWSON, 1992, p. 156), the concept’s political, cultural and pedagogic remits have been far more successful and evident in the world of performance where it has played a significant role as both a “textual effect and a reading strategy”. (GILBERT; TOMPKINS, 1996, p. 2)

As a sociocultural response, post-colonialism is a radical space and its writings and performances have been used to expose and interrogate the often-denied racist pivot and self-centred economic rationalisations that underpinned colonialism and which reinforces neo-colonialism. While this interrogation is one of the reasons post-colonial performances and studies receive more of lip-service in political and academic circles than becoming the platform for redressing the effects of colonialism, it is has gone from apologetics to becoming a radical and critical platform for contesting neo-colonial impositions by post-colonial societies and for interrogating colonial and neo-colonialism enterprises in relations between former colonial powers and the so-called second and third-world or developing nations in the face of globalisation.

In performance, post-colonialism has always been a contested space, from its early stages when the aim appeared to be that of trying to defend and explain colonised societies and culture to the understanding of their colonisers, to the second stage period when performers in post-colonial performances used strategies of self, selfhood and inverted *othering* to distinguish themselves from the dominant *other*. It has provided huge opportunities. In other words, post-colonialism has been effective as a performance trope in tackling the West’s attempt to paint former colonies and in the process fragment and distort their lived histories and contemporary experiences (Gandhi, 1998) as in the visual representations of the topographical maps of Africa, pre and post-colonialism. The questions remain to be answered as to how far and how well post-colonial performance has been successful in negotiating and overcoming the political and cultural constraints that birthed it, which it has struggled to shake for a long time and which now

unfortunately, include dismantling the destructive impacts of colonial legacy from the educational, political and cultural lives of postcolonies.

Gilbert & Tompkins' (1996) deployment of post-colonialism as textual and reading strategies offer an effective framework for historicising colonial experiences, for contesting and dismantling derogative primitivising narratives about the formerly colonised. The framework could be even more effective than hitherto as a performance trope for facilitating self-criticism, self-examination and for exploring the various socio-political and economic conditions that hold postcolonial states from meeting their advertised visions and goals. This in my view, is a historiographic task and approach that should unite education, politics, culture and history in a network of inter-connected aims and strategies rather than continue with the current practice of separating these discourses. The needs to address colonial powers and former colonised societies having to explain and defend their cultures and histories have been fully and exhaustively discussed and satisfied across disciplines, tropes and genres. What theorists and theatre-makers of all legacies need now do is re-double their efforts and shine the critical spotlight on self-reflection and examination of the internal dynamics of postcolonial states. New postcolonial performance ought to emphasise the present and future simultaneously from two perspectives. First is emphasise how postcolonies have fared and suffered from the effects of local failings and self-inflicted poor policy-making errors, and secondly, tackle the consequences of imperial capital and globalisation on postcolonies. These two remits would stand a chance if performance theorists and practitioners avoid sociocultural myopia as well as abjure the collective amnesia and poor historicisation that are produced a people's lived experience and future are premised exclusively on old rituals and mythologies.

## CONCLUSION

Today, there are two broad categories in the study and practice of post-colonial performance. Both categories have as it were, gone through and mirror to differing levels, the historical, philosophical, ideological, heuristic, radical and militaristic tendencies that characterised the growth and development of the form. The first category which I describe tentatively as *introspective post-colonialism* for lack of a better nomenclature is more than a discursive and critical strategy and vocabulary. It is a concept whose ontology is not limited to a period or to one incident. This is in effect, a making and reading strategy in which the root causes; psychological, sociocultural, economic and political effects of post-colonialism, are braided through all structures and institutions and knowledge systems and logically, exert visible lasting effects on the fabric of a postcolony society. *Introspective* post-colonial performances look inward and outward simultaneously. They are primarily, a framework for self-examination and thus, are justly critical of of the state and conditions of postcolony, even when they posture towards their former colonisers. For these reasons and although still subject to sociocultural and political exegeses of local performance ecologies, performance theorists, practitioners and academics approach *introspective post-colonialism* holistically and have created strategies and critical vocabularies that satisfy local tastes that are incidentally nurtured by the same historical and existential conditions they tackle. The political, cultural and pedagogic constraints faced by performers in this first category of post-colonial performances (*Introspective*) are contingent on the political disposition of the ruling class and funding, the latter itself being subject to and often a victim of the corollary effects of global capital and neo-colonialism.

The second category, again loosely-described as *secondary post-colonialism* for lack of a better term refers to the content, approach and conditions in which post-colonial performance is framed, appreciated, studied, read, created, presented and encountered as a by-product of colonialism in a former colonial European nation. These European nations and their cultural capitals and performance traditions are implicated in post-colonialism by vicarious experience unlike the direct and personal experiences of the form in postcolony cultures. *Secondary post-colonialism* leans

towards and aligns itself more closely to and with intercultural and syncretic performances, both products and derivatives of colonialism and post-colonialism. The categories theoretical underpinnings, appropriateness, effectiveness and authenticity, study and practices of *secondary post-colonialism* have been questioned by many critics from from postcolonies. Many of such criticisms by the likes of Soyinka (1988), Bharucha (1993) and Balme (1999) have questioned post-colonial performance practice and tropes outside formerly colonised cultures where productions have been dogged by controversy for many reasons ranging from inappropriate contextualisation, for conflating and misrepresenting whole cultures with cultural fragments and atmospherics (Soyinka). They have been faulted for other reasons as well, from their non-contextual appropriations and misinterpretation of indigenous postcolony materials and tropes for superficial economic reasons to claims of cultural distortion (Bharucha). Specifically, Soyinka and Bharucha aimed their critical barbs at productions of a well-known text and cultural material that had historical and ritual significance that their adaptors did not recognise or contextualise culturally and historically. The two materials are Soyinka's Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman* directed by Phyllida Lloyd at the Manchester Royal Exchange Theatre (RET) in 1990 and Peter Brook's *The Mahabhrata* that opened in London and later toured to other European capitals and to India.

The first form of post-colonial performance, the *Introspective*, is arguably the more powerful of the two because of its agency and in consisting of performance forms and strategies that are indigenous in origin, are firmly rooted in or derived from home-grown syncretism. Their provenance and dramaturgy knit political, cultural and pedagogic discourses and remits together and are most effective in post-colonial societies where interrogating post-colonialism is not a choice but an existential necessity that can neither be ignored nor be consigned to any one discourse alone such as to culture and education. This form does what post-colonialism ought to and is designed to do and achieves more than the "textual effect and reading strategy" Gilbert & Tompkins (1996, p. 2) highlight as its primary critical index.

This essay takes the view that the two productions of Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horse Man* and Brook's *The Mahabhrata* were bold and imaginative. Both managed to draw some attention to issues and subjects that post-colonial

performances generally explore. However theoretically and stylistically, their re-mits and approaches owe more to intercultural and transcultural discourses than to post-colonialism. In fact, it was their overtures to post-colonialism, whether intended, un-intended or just plain reckless, that raised heckles and exposed their shortcomings as cultural products. They revealed the very challenging political, cultural and pedagogic constraints that post-colonial performance and study face in former coloniser countries. Time does not permit one to undertake a detailed study of examples of performances and why post-colonial performance practice, different from its study and criticism, remains contentious and an ambiguous and ambivalent project in academies in former coloniser societies. The policy of avoiding divisive nationalistic sentiments and the resistance of governments to forms of cultural and political actions that nurture sectional cultural and historical sensibilities in western multicultural metropolises mean that postcolonial performance faces political, cultural and pedagogic constraints. These constraints may not necessarily oppose studying the form but they do disadvantage practice which is in every sense a more effective route to learning and understanding a concept and history. This approach to post-colonial performance is different in comparison to how the form has flourished in postcolony settings in Africa and Asia.

In countries such as Brazil and the US that were birthed by colonial experience of both the exploitation and settler types, post-colonial performance sits at the interface where *introspective* postcolony-grown and *secondary* post-colonialisms meet. Practitioners in such societies have many more complex variables to play with, to research and interrogate and this is what makes post-colonial performance a rich vein of creativity and imagination in such creative spaces. However, these complex variables and opportunities to create something fresh, vibrant, living and authentic also come with very unique political, cultural and pedagogic constraints. This is the creative question for Brazilian practitioners, critics, cultural agents, politicians and educators have to tackle robustly. The result will hopefully yield another strand or genre, a different post-colonial performance discourse and practice that captures and interrogates the unique cultural topography of Brazil and similar societies of which there are more, where exploitation and settler colonialism produced sociocultural postcolony societies that are quite different from what there are in Africa and Asia. Their experiences will not only enrich the field

of post-colonial performance, it will bridge the boundary between what I see as home-grown *introspective* and *secondary* post-colonial performance traditions.



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