

**Drama and the Postcolonial
Experience**

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Abstract

More than three-quarters of the people living in the world today have had their lives shaped by the experience of colonialism. The past few decades have witnessed the gradual development of postcolonial drama as a challenge to the artistic hegemony of English and American canon. Postcolonial drama concentrates on the works of major dramatists from the postcolonial countries. In my paper, I will examine the ways in which the hybrid postcolonial drama has been involved in resisting the enduring effects of colonialism and the ways in which it acts as a resonant site for resistance strategies. I will explore strategies such as canonical counter-discourse, reworking of Christian myths and doctrines, ritual, the Carnival, counter-discursive story-telling, manipulating time and space to interrogate official history, Indigenizing English, song, music, mime, and redressing gender-related gaps in the official colonial history.

ملخص

أكثر من ثلاثة أرباع شعوب العالم يعيشون اليوم حياة صقلتها تجربة الإستعمار. شهدت العقود القليلة الماضية التطور التدريجي لمسرح ما بعد الإستعمار تحدياً للهيمنة الفنية للنموذج الأمريكي. يركز مسرح مرحلة ما بعد الإستعمار على أهم الأعمال لأبرز مسرحيي بلدان ما بعد الإستعمار. في هذه الدراسة سأبحث في السبل التي انتهجها المسرح الهجين لمرحلة ما بعد الإستعمار لمقاومة الآثار المستديمة للإستعمار والطرق التي يتصرف بها بإعتباره الملاذ الأخير في إستراتيجيات المقاومة. سأقوم بإستكشاف نموذج مقاومة الخطاب و إعادة صياغة الأساطير والمذاهب والطقوس و الكرنفال و التلاعب في الزمان والمكان لمساءلة التاريخ الرسمي و جعل الإنجليزية لغة محلية،

الغناء، الموسيقى، التمثيلية الصامتة، وتصحيح الهوات المتصلة بالجنس في التاريخ
الرسمي للإستعمار.

The past few decades have witnessed the gradual development of postcolonial drama as a challenge to the artistic hegemony of the traditional English and American canon. Postcolonial theory provides a powerful approach to literatures written by the colonized people who attempt to put into words their identity, or literature written in western countries, which deals with different aspects of colonization. Postcolonial studies, as a “bona fide academic field of research” (Huggan 228) has been achieving importance since the 1970s.

In *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), Edward Said points out that “the assertion of identity is by no means a mere ceremonial matter in the contemporary world” (42). Identity is a vital as well as a hotly disputed topic in literary and cultural studies. For almost three decades, it has been “a central focus of debate for psychoanalytic, poststructuralist, and cultural materialist criticism in areas ranging from postcolonial and ethnic studies to feminism and queer theory” (Moya 1). Therefore, as the British Empire’s control began to decline, the colonized people began to map out a new identity for their own political future and gradually began to seek their own voices. After colonialism it was very important to imagine “a new transformation of social consciousness which exceeds the reified identities and rigid boundaries invoked by national consciousness” (Crow and Banfield 124).

Among the many challenges in front of postcolonial writers are the attempts to both revitalize their culture and to contest the preconceptions about their culture. Postcolonial writers want to produce a literature, which helps to reconstitute the hybrid identity of the colonized people. The term ‘hybrid’ refers to the concept of hybridity, an important concept in postcolonial theory, referring to the integration of cultural signs and practices from the colonizing and the colonized cultures.

Drama is the strangest and most enchanting of all types of literature. It “lies so near to the deeper consciousness of the nation in which it takes its rise; it is capable of addressing itself so wildly and so diversely to peoples of far distant ages and of varying climes; it is

so social in its aims and in its appreciation” (Nicol 9). It is a many-sided literary form of shaping the practices and languages of collective memory and identity. Compared to the other literary forms, Drama is a much more “socially charged aesthetic medium” (Talwar 94) and it is a great help in rediscovering, and reconstituting of the independent identity and the cultural values of a nation.

Postcolonial drama intersects with postcolonial theories and it can act as a powerful form of cultural capital. In postcolonial context, dramatists have been creating drama for a range of vital cultural functions. They are interested in this literary form to “define and affirm their people’s cultural personality- in the face of continuing cultural, economic and political subjugation- by recovering the past, freed from the biases of metropolitan or mainstream history” (Crow and Banfield 17). Postcolonial drama concentrates on the works of major dramatists from the postcolonial countries. It considers the plays of such dramatists as Wole Soyinka from Nigeria, Derek Walcott from St. Lucia, West Indies, Girish Karnad from India, Athol Fugard from South Africa, Dorothy Hewett, Stephen Sewell, Louis Nowra, and Jack Davis from Australia, Vincent O’Sullivan from New Zealand, and Kee Thuan Chye from Malaysia. Although these dramatists reflect different cultures and histories, they share the common condition of cultural subjection, which has formed their dramas.

The 20th century has witnessed the development of postcolonial drama as a challenge to the literary superiority of the traditional English and American canon. Postcolonial drama deals with the ways in which drama has been effective in resisting the continuing effects of colonialism. It is a response to the painful experience of European colonialism and the regeneration of the colonized communities. Postcolonial dramatists from a variety of countries and societies have attempted to combine the performance modes of their indigenous traditions with the Western dramatic form. Incorporating some western forms, postcolonial drama interrogates the domination that forms the foundation of colonial representation.

English Literature had a privileged position in the colonial schools, colleges and universities. Its study was designed to ‘civilize’ native students by fixing in their mind the British culture and values, without paying any attention to the local context. Therefore, it is not

surprising that colonized writers, poets and playwrights attempt tirelessly to rework the European classics in order to put in them more local socio-cultural values and to take away their structures of power and authority. Helen Tiffin terms this project “canonical counter-discourse” (22) while Richard Terdiman coined the term ‘counter-discourse’ in 1985. Although Terdiman was talking about “symbolic resistance in nineteenth-century France, the term has been eagerly embraced by post-colonial critics such as Slemon (1988) and Tiffin (1988)” (Ashcroft 32). Canonical counter-discourse is a process by which the postcolonial writers expose and dismantle the basic assumptions of a specific canonical text by developing a counter text that maintain some of the identifying signifiers of the original text while changing its structures of power.

Rewriting the characters, the story, the context, and the genre of the canonical text, postcolonial writers interrogate the cultural legacy of European colonialism. Counter-discourse is not a plain strategy of substitution, rather it asks for deconstructing significations of power in the canonical text. Drama, as a genre, is principally suitable to counter- discursive project and is useful for its expression because any presentation of a play is a continual reacting of an original script. The different layers of meaning that a performance of a play communicates can act counter-discursively. Among the many postcolonial reworking of canonical texts, Shakespeare’s plays are well-known targets. The spread of his plays within cultural and educational spheres has been a powerful hegemonic force throughout the history of the British Empire. Leela Gandhi states “English Studies [and Shakespeare as a central figure] was instrumental in confirming the ‘hegemony’ or ‘rule by consent’ of European colonialism” (145).

Using selected parts of master narratives, instead of focusing on one rewriting project, to speak about the experience of the colonized subject is common to postcolonial reworking of Shakespeare. *The Golden Age* (1985) by Louis Nowra, Australian dramatist and novelist, for example, like many postcolonial counter-discursive plays uses selected parts of Shakespeare’s *King Lear* and Euripides’ *Iphigenia in Tauris* to speak about the experience of the colonized people. Shakespeare’s *Othello* is the canonical target and discursive interpretation of *Not Now, Sweet Desdemona* (1968) by South African Murray Carlin. Presenting miscegenation as a real event, *Not Now*,

Sweet Desdemona concentrates on racial issues. Carlin's temporal and political rearrangement of *Othello* writes a play that takes on the history of racism that Shakespeare's play helped to institutionalize it in the apartheid.

In Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, the meeting between Prospero and Caliban seems to be an allegory of a Renaissance colonial encounter. Prospero gives emphasis to his gift of language to Caliban, but he considers him unable of 'nurture'-cultural progress. *The Tempest* is the most commonly chosen play for counter-discursive interrogations of Shakespeare. Aimé Césaire's *A Tempest* is one of several works written in the past forty years taking Shakespeare's play as a site for revising colonial experience. Aimé Césaire wrote *A Tempest* originally in French and Richard Miller translated it into English in 1985. It makes several uses of Shakespeare's play, taking both a more colloquial and more clearly political perspective on the action. In this play, Prospero is trying to conceal a secret "empire" that he has discovered, ripe for conquest. He finds the pleasures of colonial rule so irresistible that he refuses to return to Europe.

Robinson Crusoe also is a target in the project of "canonical counter-discourse" because it is a classic text of Eurocentrism. For the Caribbean writers, *Robinson Crusoe*, along with *The Tempest*, "is held responsible for establishing and maintaining the New World tropologies that have lead to the subordination of black peoples in a master/ slave dialect" (Gilbert and Tompkins 36). Walcott's *Pantomime* (1978) resituates *Robinson Crusoe* in a new temporal setting but preserves its original geographic location, it is set on the Caribbean Island of Tobago, often thought of as the original setting for *Robinson Crusoe*. *Pantomime* is a clear example of postcolonial writers' "writing back" to the imperial centre. The main reason for re-writing of *Robinson Crusoe* by Walcott is the novel's importance and power. *Pantomime* changes the genre of the original text as one of its major counter-discursive strategies. *Pantomime* has as its fundamental column the relationship between Robinson Crusoe and his man Friday. Dramatic form of the novel is a further reaction to the original script. Walcott presents a British actor, a hotel owner, named Harry Trewe and his Trinidadian servant Jackson Phillip. The only idea Harry has for entertaining the guests of his low budget retreat is a pantomime of *Robinson Crusoe*. He asks Jackson to play Friday to his

Crusoe. Things become interesting when Harry suggests reversing their roles for the purposes of comedy. The results start to turn away from the comedic and Harry seems to be unhappy and uncomfortable in that situation, his suggestion becoming slightly more than he is able to accept. Through the course of speedy dialogue exchanges and the exhibition of their individual acting talent, the men switch roles several times.

Classical Greek drama is another important target for canonical counter-discourse, especially in African countries, where contemporary theatre practices maintain strong roots in ritual and festival. The traditional contexts of much African drama also offer a performance culture, which African dramatists use to interrogate European classical models. Indigenous African songs, dance, folk tales, myths, rituals, and ceremonies help African drama construct some forms of narrative that differ from the dominant conventions of Western theater.

Euripides' *The Bacchae* is one of the best plays for appropriation by colonized or other marginalized people because it shows so clearly the destruction of a tyrant. Postcolonial dramatist can easily refigure Pentheus- the young king of Thebes who does things quickly without thinking about the consequences and rejects anything he does not understand- as an agent of colonialism. The most considerable postcolonial re-writing of the play is Wole Soyinka's *The Bacchae of Euripides: A Communion Rite*. In Soyinka's hands, *The Bacchae* becomes a communal feast, a celebration of life, and a commanding and rich ritual of the human and social psyche. Soyinka resituates the action in time of war, Nigeria's post-independence civil wars. He adds wedding feast, and changes some parts of the original play. By doing this, Soyinka opens up a space for the performance of local histories and mythology.

Sophocles' *Antigone* has also received a considerable counter-discursive consideration because it argues about the story of a woman who obeyed the laws of morality rather than the laws of the state and in the end was killed for her defiance. Athol Fugard, South African playwright, and his colleagues, John Kani, and Winston Ntshona wrote *The Island* (1973), resituating Sophocles' *Antigone* on Robbin Island, located just off the Cape Town mainland, where South African political prisoners were imprisoned- Nelson Mandela spent most of

his 26 years of imprisonment there. The play involves two lifetime inmates who stage a production of Sophocles' *Antigone*.

There is a complicated relationship between the Bible and the colonial project. On one hand "Christianity was, in many instances, introduced to African colonies via imperial conquest, and, more, specifically in the British colonies, via the English language" (Talib 83-84) and on the other hand missionaries used biblical texts to strengthen British imperial intentions among the colonized people. Therefore, it is not surprising that, as a master text, which has helped and justified the colonial project of Western countries, the Bible has also received considerable counter-discursive attention. Postcolonial dramatists, through the reworking of different Biblical myths, are eagerly after attacking the basics of Western culture. Jack Davis, referred to as the 20th Century's Aboriginal Poet Laureate, is a notable Australian 20th Century playwright who uses Biblical stories and myths to recover the indigenous Aboriginal history, which has been repressed in official versions of European settlement in Australia. In his play, *In Our Town* (1990), which is about the problems of two young men returning home from the Second World War, Uncle Herbie, one of the Aboriginal characters of the play, says that "When they [European settlement] come here they had the Bible and we had the land, [now] they've got the land and we've got the Bible" (44). In *No Sugar* (1985), Jack Davis uses the Biblical story of King Herod's massacre to recover black history, which has been repressed by colonial history writers. *No Sugar* intends to expose Australian racism.

To show the effects of colonialism on indigenous cultures, some of the postcolonial dramatists translate the Bible's content and rework its form so that it is communicated through story-telling rather than public worship reading. By doing this, they substitute the codes, conventions and cultural associations of the canonical text with those of different indigenous ones. The reworking of Bible has produced a number of classic plays, which provide space for an interrogation of the Christian doctrine. A case in point is *Woza Albert* (1981), by Percy Mtwa, Mbongeni Ngema, and Barney Simon, which sees the issue of apartheid as a problem. It satirizes about what would happen if the Second Coming of Christ occurred in South Africa.

There are a number of plays that rework texts that are already counter-discursive, especially in settler colonies where the canonical texts has had a diverse impact on indigenous and non-indigenous groups. One example is *Playboy of the West Indies* (1984) by Trinidadian playwright Mustapha Matura, a Caribbean reworking of Synge's *The Playboy of the Western World* (1911). All of Matura's work even his reworkings, *Playboy of the West Indies* and *Sisters*, a reworking of Chekhov's *Three Sisters* (1901) are based in Trinidad – Colonial Trinidad 1939. Matura states, "We need a theatre about Trinidad and the Caribbean experience so we can see reflections of our past, present and future" (qtd. in Lee 13).

Movies "affirm and maintain the culture of which they are part" (Maltby and Craven 8). They reveal directly or indirectly something about "national experience, identity, culture, temperament, ideologies, and aesthetic principles" (Belton 123). They have become one of "our chief means of telling each other about the world" (Rosenstone 206). Marx believed that religion is the opium of the people, but if he had seen the mass demand of Hollywood movies, he would have rated these films as an equally powerful drug. Hollywood movies are special signifiers of post war American domination of world culture, and therefore, they "are appropriate systems for discursive deconstruction" (Gilbert and Tompkins 49). The rewriting of movie texts in native Canadian plays such as Monique Mojica's *Princess Pocahontas and the Blue Spots* (1991) and Margo Kane's *Moonlodge* (1990) are only two examples of many other rewritings of Hollywood movies. In *Princess Pocahontas and the Blue Spots*, Monique Mojica uses colonial stereotypes about Indians to subvert them and to reclaim an ethnic and gendered identity that respects cultural diversities and values the individuality of native and non-native people. *Princess Pocahontas and the Blue Spots* acknowledges the threat of Euro-American culture and grounds identity in the concept of a Pan-Indian community. By refusing negative stereotypes, these two playwrights create spaces for contemporary native women to articulate their subjectivities. Rejecting the single all-encompassing identity shaped by Hollywood movies, the plays dismantle images that have defined the indigenous Indian and force readers or the audience to recognize the constructedness of these images.

Soyinka in his principal critical work, *Myth, Literature, and the African World* (1976), examines the role of the artist in the light of Yoruba mythology and symbolism. From the first pages of the book, he criticizes a new discursive colonization and suggests a counter-discursive strategy for it. He argues that black Africans have been gently invited to surrender themselves to a second era of colonization, this time by the ones “whose theories and prescriptions are derived from the apprehension of *their* world, their history, *their* social neuroses and *their* value systems”(x). This discursive colonization shows itself in the negative response to non-western cultural drama in postcolonial countries by many western critics. By doing this, they want to impose western forms in non-western settings.

Robert Serumaga, a Ugandan playwright, whose works shows his preoccupation with social and political change, argues that received performance practices, like imported colonial systems, are essentially ideological. He argues that “the theatre of Europe came to Africa and established itself in complete ignorance of and indifference to [local] traditions” (qtd. in Graham-White 89). Traditional performances have special functions in postcolonial societies and are often key sites of resistance to imposed values and practices. These performances, rooted in folk culture, are not only devices that help in the safeguarding of history but are also effective strategies for safeguarding cultural difference through particular systems of communication and through specific values related to indigenous customs.

Ritual is one of the strongest, most suitable and at the same times most misunderstood markers of cultural dissimilarity and stability in postcolonial countries. Some postcolonial dramatists mix local rituals with some aspects of western drama to place ritual in a modern world. The resulting hybridity can present a positive way of locating ritual in the postcolonial context and the coexistence of ritual and drama preserves and disseminates traditional forms and practices. We can categorize ritual in postcolonial plays in two categories. The first type of drama centers on a ritual or sometimes a number of related rituals, which gives structure to the action and affects the style of the performance. For example, *The Sacrifice of Kreli* (1976) by Fatima Dike, South African dramatist, dramatizes two rituals intended to restore the contemporary community through the restoration of

traditional performance. According to Femi Osofian, Nigerian critic, novelist, and playwright, *Death and the King's Horseman* is the play in which "Soyinka succeeds most in recreating the complete, credible world of African ritual [because] here the ritual form is not merely recast, but the playwright invests it with a dialectic, and his personal vision intervenes for a crucial interrogation of history"(77).

There is a second type of play, which uses ritual more as a complementary activity. It is used as a part of a larger recuperation of tradition and history. It is used as an expression of hybridization, as a device to establish setting or context, or as a performative model for a range of sections of the action or dialogue. Such ritual elements are related with the theme(s) of the play. A case in point is *Township Fever* (1991) by Mbongeni Ngema, South African playwright, musician, choreographer, and director. The play incorporates a Zulu protection ritual to disperse throughout the auditorium the smoke that each striker must breathe. The ritual prepares them for the dangers they face and emphasizes the inhumanity of the conditions under which they worked.

The Broken Calabash (1984) by Tess Onwueme, Nigerian and Africa's best known female dramatist is set against a background of the Igbo *Ine* festival which marks the beginning of the harvest, and includes various ritual that help the community prepare for the new yam season. The ritual staged is a dance in which the young people of the village perform comic movements for the amusement and teaching of their community. In *The Broken Calabash*, Onwueme problematizes "traditional value systems especially in respect of their bearing on women right" (Sage and Showalter 481).

Ritual and drama have objective reality and are in harmony with each other in India. For example, in Hindu drama, there are ritual-centered plays, plays that involve preliminary rituals, which remove obstacles in the way of successful performance or preliminary rituals, which sanctify the stage followed by concluding rituals. Ritual frames these Hindu plays and relate their precise theatrical activities more closely with sacred or devotional rites. Girish Karnad in *Hayavadana*, meaning 'the one with the horse's head', uses a tale from the Kathasaritsagara, and its adaptation in Thomas Mann's "The Transposed Heads". The play starts performing the routine worship of

Lord Ganesha, a preliminary ritual – removing obstacle in the way of successful performance.

Carnival is a colorful and exciting event celebrated all over the Caribbean Region. Each island has its distinctive way of celebrating carnival, and the dates of carnival are different all over the islands. The performative elements of a society's secular festivals, alike to those of its religious rituals provide a major archive for a postcolonial drama, which aims to articulate the specifications of local experience and to explore and articulate their postcolonial identity. Such secular festivals are syncretic events, which incorporate several elements of the colonizing culture even while expressing difference from them. They present so many stock characters and situations, which may inspire a society's drama and more considerably a style of performance that decentres imperial conventions.

Festival-based drama is lively, non-naturalistic, and self-consciously theatrical. It calls attention to public space, communal activity, and the languages or dialects spoken by the people of region and similar to ritual drama, festival-based drama works towards revitalizing the folk culture. The Trinidad Carnival is an example of a secular event, which has influenced the drama of its region. The inherent subversiveness of carnival and its particular background make it a suitable form for an indigenous postcolonial drama. Errol Hill states "substantial material exists in the Trinidad Carnival, past and present, for the creation of a unique form of theatre" (110). The incorporation of Carnival elements into a play influences its form. This is obvious in *The Joker of Seville* (1974) by Derek Walcott. Walcott's joker stands as a critique of the social mores of colonial masters. Walcott incorporate Carnival elements such as, Carnival set of clothes, masquerade, round stage, Calinda (stick-fighting dance of Trinidad) rhythms, and calypso to creolize the original source text. Doing so, he reworks Eurocentric forms to create a distinctive West Indian play and turns an imported moral lesson into a performance of indigenous culture and history.

French philosopher Jacques Derrida coined the term "deconstruction" in the 1960s and writers, and readers use it in contemporary humanities and social sciences to denote a philosophy of meaning that deals with the ways that meaning is constructed and understood. It involves discovering, recognizing, and understanding

the underlying implicit assumptions, ideas, and frameworks that form the basis for thought and belief. In the area of deconstruction and postcolonialism, history is generally considered as a discourse that is open to interpretation as any other discourse. Postcolonial studies re-examine the history and legacy of colonialism; their relation to cultural representations, and to the formation and institutionalization of knowledge. Grey Denning argues that "History is not the past: it is a consciousness of the past used for present purposes" (170). Colonial histories often substitute local, indigenous histories with a Eurocentric account of the past. Postcolonial playwrights explore and deploy history differently in their drama. Decolonizing and presenting alternative reassessed versions of their history, they construct discursive contexts to present the key events experienced by their community.

Postcolonial plays use the strategy of representing the alternative historical perspectives, in other words counter-discursive version of the past, to disperse the authority of colonialist official accounts. Wale Ogunyemi, a prolific playwright, and a scholar of the Yoruba world, brought its history, myths and lore into his writing. In his historical dramas, for instance in *Kiriji* (1976) and *Ijaye War: A Historical Drama* (1970) he draws on internecine 19th century Yoruba wars. He sets colonial agents in conflict with Nigerian peoples in order to center parts of history that are forgotten or forbidden.

An effective strategy of counter-discursive histories is the reclamation of subversive figures to make them into heroes. The leader of an uprising against colonial forces or someone generally historicized as infamous is often reconstructed in postcolonial drama to play an important role in the struggle for freedom from imperial rule. Derek Walcott's *Henri Christophe: A Chronicle in Seven Scenes* (1950), honors one of leaders of the Haitian Revolution. The dramatization of parts of the history in post-revolutionary Haiti offered space for honoring one of the leaders of the revolution and for "an exploring of problems of 'independence', among them nation-building, leadership, and the reconstructions of identity" (Thieme 46). One of the strongest reclamations of a lost and dishonored figure occurs in *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* (1976) by the well-known Kenyan writer, Ngugi wa Thiong'o and his colleague Micere Mugo.

They have built a potent and challenging play out of the circumstances surrounding the trial of one of the leaders of the Mau Mau revolution.

Counter- discursive history replaces some groups who have been left out of the official records. The recuperation of women's histories is a fundamental mission for women all over the world. For a contemporary postcolonial woman in search of her identity the recuperation of the past will have great effect on the present reality of her life and the life of her nation. A number of postcolonial plays provide spaces for the specific refiguring of gender role or identities within restructured histories. This is achieved successfully in different ways; for example by evaluating the gender-specific constructions approved by imperial history; by exploring the areas of women's subjugation and invisibility in the colonial situation; by reworking gender related gaps in the official record; by casting historical women as powerful, respected community leaders; by refusing existing gender-stereotypes and significantly by staging self-reflexive interventions into theatrical representation itself (Gilbert and Tompkins 120).

Depicting women as history's essential figures can be mainly subversive in cultures that have always been set aside for male power and exclusive privilege of public action. *Parables for a Season* (1993) by Tess Onwueme, one the most prolific and outstanding female dramatist of the new generation of African writers from Nigeria, depicts a restricted Igbo social order through its focus on influential women who replace the king and rule the kingdom as well as any man could. *The Sacrifice of Krelu* by Fatima Dike depicts a strong character who manages to maintain a community's health despite external attempts to destroy its people's dignity, history, and cultural identities and traditions. The play rather is not concerned with feminist issues such as freedom or equality for women; rather it is concerned with restoring the pride of a larger community of women and men.

Storyteller is a key manipulator of different narratives, including historical narrative, in colonial societies and story telling, which lies at the root of all dramatic cultures, is a major strategy in postcolonial drama. A drama based on story-telling conventions centres history not as an inevitable and concluded truth, but rather as a continually reconstructed fiction which can only be incomplete, provisional. Story telling gives to postcolonial history play a certain cultural specificity

and a corresponding resistance. It is a strategy for reconsidering history in postcolonial drama. The storyteller revises history in every performance by making the past speak to the present. Story telling can form the structural framework of the whole play or it can be included into a more conventional play through one of the characters. In 1982, Jack Davis “truly put Indigenous writing for performance on the theatrical map with *The Dreamers*, set in 1970s kitchen of an Aboriginal family and dealing with the poverty and confusion created by their sense of displacement and the clash of cultures”(Webby 225).

The unwritten history and literature of pre-contact past were “transformed from one generation to the next by carefully trained storytellers who received knowledge through their ears as societies that use the written word receive information through their eyes” (Nordyke 13). Many pre-contact storytellers were women and thus their authorities as historians were ignored by invading European. Aidoo’s *The Dilemma of a Ghost* (1965) uses a number of older members of the community to act as choric storytellers who relate current issues to traditional contexts. The older members of the community who comment on and advance the action reinforce the strength of the women and the ineffectiveness of the men whose access to western education has diminished their useful archive of local knowledge and history.

Remapping of space is a central project for postcolonial playwrights whose lands were invaded by European powers to fracture time alongside with the historicizing and remapping of space in their plays. Even in occupation colonies, for example Nigeria, where local cultures regained control over their land after independence, the spatial inscription of colonialism have had an enduring legacy. “The specter of a haunted (and haunting) landscape emerges even more clearly in Louis Nowra’s *Inside the Island* and Janis Balodis’s *Too Young for Ghosts* (1985), two earlier plays that detail settler responses to an alien land and its indigenous inhabitants” (Gilbert, 115).

Language operates as a fundamental medium through which meaning is filtered, but it also acts as a cultural system that has meaning in itself. Language is often an essential question in postcolonial studies. During colonization, colonizers usually imposed their language onto the peoples they colonized, coercing colonized

people to speak the colonizers tongues. In response to the systematic imposition of colonial languages, some postcolonial writers advocate a complete return to the use of indigenous languages. Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Kenyan playwright, novelist, and essayist is the most radical among those writers who have chosen to turn away from English. Some other writers see the language, for example English, imposed by the colonizer as a more practical alternative, using the colonial language both to enhance inter-nation communication and to counter a colonial past through de-forming a "standard" European tongue and re-forming it in new literary forms. Native American poet, novelist and critic Gerald Vizenor has celebrated English as a vehicle for resistance. Postcolonial plays and stages are considerable spaces from which to express linguistic resistance to colonialism and imperialism. Dramatists have concentrated on speaking in voices that have been less inflected by colonialism to destabilize colonial authority.

While some postcolonial dramatists deliberately avoid using the imperial language altogether, many more use it as a basic language which is necessarily modified, subverted, or decentered when indigenous languages are incorporated into the play. One of the main features of contemporary Maori drama in New Zealand is its increasing uses of indigenous language. *Death of the Lord* by Rowley Habib (Rore Hapipi), a playwright, poet and fiction writer and *In the Wilderness Without a Hat* by Hone Tuwhare, New Zealand's most distinguished Maori poet and playwright writing in English, use the formal English as well as Maori. *Death of the Land* is a play about the continuing signing away of Maori land in the Land Courts. *Emily of Emerald Hill* (1985) by Stella Kon, the most distinguished Singaporean contemporary playwright, uses Singapore English, which is a kind of indigenized version of English language. In *The Sea at Dauphin* (1970), Walcott uses French and English Creole at the same time because the most commonly used form of St. Lucian Creole has a French rather than an English lexicon.

Postcolonial drama, which embraces myth and ritual, is always associated with the power of music and song, the forces by which "cultural emancipation and empowerment may be achieved" (Crow and Banfield 60). The music, and the energies that it arouses, return the characters and audience to their cultural roots. Postcolonial drama

employs recuperated indigenous song and music or hybridized forms. Indigenous song and music recalls pre-contact ways of communication, prove the validity of the continued oral traditions, and helps to dismantle the conventional western representation. Music is a central device in African drama. Used as a part of a larger project of indigenizing Eurocentric theater forms, music provides a means of expression that spoken dialogue cannot replace. Following Wole Soyinka, postcolonial African playwrights like J. P. Clark, Ola Rotimi, Femi Osofisan, and Bode Sowande, to name but a few, “all borrow profusely from traditional forms in their use of music, dance, songs and costumes”(Jackson 167). Music and dance, which first emerge in Wole Soyinka’s *The Bacchae of Euripides: A Communion Rite*, are then fully explored with indigenous material in *Death and the King’s Horseman*.

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