

**THE APPROPRIATION OF THE ALIENATION EFFECT BY SELECTED
THEATRE FOR DEVELOPMENT TROUPES IN KENYA**

BY

**DANIEL KNIGHT WERE
LITERATURE DEPARTMENT**

**A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS OF KENYATTA UNIVERSITY**

DECEMBER 2009

DECLARATION

This thesis is my original research and has not been presented for a degree in any other university or any other award.

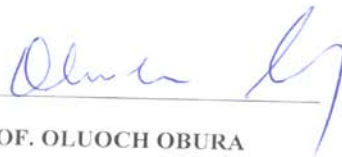
SIGN: 

DATE: 21/12/2009

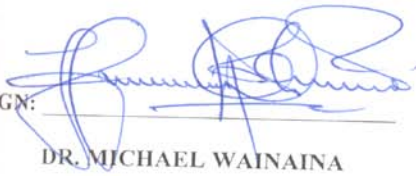
DANIEL. K. WERE

C50/6001/2003

We acknowledge that the work reported in this thesis was carried out by the candidate under our supervision.

SIGN: 
PROF. OLUOCH OBURA

DATE: 2/2/10.

SIGN: 
DR. MICHAEL WAINAINA

DATE: 1st February 2010.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents Clement and Tabitha

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am greatly indebted to the Council for social Science research in Africa (CODESRIA) for their timely grant which supported this research and thesis writing.

Sincere appreciation to my supervisors, Professor Oluoch Obura and Dr. Michael Wainaina for directing this thesis to its completion. My special regards to Dr. Wainaina for your critical insights, intellectual brilliance and overwhelming support.

Most of this work is the outcome of the lengthy intellectual discourses and peer reviews we held with Siboe Makokha. I am deeply grateful for your emotional support and intellectual stimulus which lit in me the spirit to soldier on. I acknowledge the encouragement which proved to me that where there is a will, there is always a way.

I sincerely appreciate; Professor Emmanuel Mbogo, Dr. Ezekiel Alembi, Professor Eric Aseka, Dr. Christopher Odhiambo, Oby Obyerodhyambo, Jane Plastow, Khayesi Melkizedek, Emmanuel Shikuku and Collins Shibira. Your intellectual insights, emotional encouragement and myriad support were worthwhile. I could not have accomplished this feat singlehandedly.

A word of thanks is also due to the staff of Kenyatta University main Library and Steve Namaswa of the Kenyatta University Literature Department Resource Centre. Your support enabled me access all the literature and materials I needed most.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Declaration	ii
Dedication	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
Table of Contents	v
Abstract	vi

CHAPTER ONE: CONTEXTUALISING THE ALIENATION EFFECT IN THEATRE FOR DEVELOPMENT

1.1. Background to the study	1
1.2. Definition of Terms	7
1.3. Statement of the Problem	9
1.4. Research objectives	10
1.5. Research questions	10
1.6. Rationale for the study	10
1.7. Significance of the Study	12
1.8. Scope and Limitation	13
1.9. Literature Review	14
1.10. Theoretical Framework	23
1.11. Research Methodology	28

CHAPTER TWO: DOCTRINES OF THEATRE AND DEVELOPMENT IN KENYA

2.1. Introduction	31
2.2. Doctrines of Development	31
2.3. Foundations of Theatre for Development in Kenya	38
2.4. Theatre for Development Renaissance	40
2.5. Theatre for Development and Conscientisation	43
2.6. Conclusion	46

CHAPTER THREE: AESTHETICS OF THE ALIENATION EFFECT; AMATEUR THEATRE PRODUCTIONS

3.1. Introduction	47
3.2. Amateur Theatre Productions Group Profile	48
3.3. Performance Space	49
3.4. The Play/Script	54
3.5. Acting	61
3.6. Narration/Facilitation	67
3.7. Conclusion	75

**CHAPTER FOUR: TOWARDS CONSCIENTISATION; HOUSE OF COURAGE
THEATRE TROUPE**

4.1. Introduction	76
4.2. House of Courage Theatre Troupe Profile	76
4.3. Performance Space	77
4.4. The Play/Script	81
4.5. Acting	85
4.6. Narration/Facilitation	88
4.7. Conclusion	93

**CHAPTER FIVE: TOWARDS A SIMULTANEOUS DRAMATURGY; SANAA
THEATRE GROUP**

5.1. Introduction	94
5.2. Sanaa Theatre Group Profile	94
5.3. Performance Space	95
5.4. The Play/Script	99
5.5. Acting	101
5.6. Narration/Facilitation	104
5.7. Conclusion	108

**CHAPTER SIX: THE APPROPRIATION OF THE ALIENATION EFFECT;
ISSUES AND DILEMMAS**

6.1. Introduction	109
6.2. Scripting and Performance	110
6.3. Facilitation	117
6.4. Conclusion	124

CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1. Introduction	125
7.2. General Observations and Synthesis of the Findings	126
7.3. Specific Findings from the groups	130
7.4. Recommendations for Future Research Directions	133
7.5. Works Cited	135

FIGURES

1.1. Elements of Aristotelian and Brechtian Theatre	25
1.2. The Freytag pyramid	110
1.3. Timeline for a theatre for development script	112

ABSTRACT

This study examined the use of Brecht's concept of the alienation effect by selected theatre for development troupes in Kenya. It emerged that theatre for development is mainly used by nongovernmental organizations for grassroots development. Nonetheless, several deficiencies at the level of practice and technique hinder theatre for development from realizing its ultimate potential. These deficiencies were mainly attributable to the inability of theatre for development practices to espouse the alienation effect. This would have otherwise enhanced the ability of theatre for development to attain conscientisation and ultimately development.

This study therefore examined the use of the alienation effect by selected theatre for development troupes in Kenya. In this context, I identified and evaluated the appropriation of the Brecht's alienation effect by *Amateur*, *Sanaa* and *House of Courage* theatre troupes. I also assessed the challenges that hindered these troupes from effectively appropriating Brecht's alienation effect. The methodology adopted was through participant observation where I attended three performances by each troupe and observed the use of these techniques in the performances. I also carried out interviews with the performers, the audience, and theatre resource persons for a critical appraisal.

The findings revealed that the three troupes appropriate some elements of the alienation effect, although some of the performances fell short of realizing the alienation effect. From my analysis of the performances and the challenges arising thereof, I make recommendations on improving the theatre for development practice in Kenya.

CHAPTER ONE
CONTEXTUALISING THE ALIENATION EFFECT IN THEATRE FOR
DEVELOPMENT

The philosophers have tried to understand the world, the point now is to change it.

Karl Marx¹

1.1. Background to the Study

Since many third world countries gained independence, theatre for development has gained significant recognition. This stems from the increased adoption of this theatrical genre as a tool for raising awareness and critical consciousness at the community level. Many individuals and groups with a keen focus on grassroots development have therefore adopted this genre for community empowerment and development. In Kenya, the immediate post independence governments' sessional paper no. 10 of 1965 identified poverty, ignorance and disease as the three major barriers to development.² Much as the government implemented several initiatives in line with this policy paper, many of these development goals remain unrealized to date. For instance, the 2005 Kenya National Human Development report states that 57% of the Kenyan citizens live below the poverty line.³ Majority of these are to be found either in the rural areas or in slums in the urban areas. It is also

¹ See Marx, Karl. *Eleventh Thesis on Feuerbach*. Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1969.

² See Kenya, Republic. Sessional Paper no. 10. *African socialism and its application in planning in Kenya*. Nairobi, 1965.

³ See UNDP. *Linking Industrialization with Human Development*. 4th Kenya National Human Development Report, 2006.

estimated that 40% of the Kenyan population is still illiterate and the country has a declining life expectancy of 57 years.⁴

In response to these numerous developmental challenges, a lot of nongovernmental organizations have mushroomed in Kenya. The NGOs are mainly donor funded and have emerged to support the governments' initiatives towards development. The conception of development by many of these NGOs is premised on Freire's conscientisation paradigm.⁵ In implementing this discourse, most of these NGOs have instituted community empowerment programs. The focus for many of these community programmes has been education and advocacy of the masses to enhance self reliance.

With the acknowledged fact that majority of the rural or urban slum populations are either ignorant or illiterate, communication methodologies that are geared towards a semiliterate population have been an imperative need. As Chambers observes, these methodologies do exist but still more are needed "...to facilitate personal awareness, including epistemological awareness, meaning being self-critically aware of how we learn and mislearn and how we construct our realities...."⁶

⁴ Ibid., 1.

⁵ Freire's conscientisation paradigm which emphasizes a participatory approach to development has been popularly adopted by many nongovernmental organizations for grassroots development.

⁶ See Chambers, Robert. *Ideas for development: Reflecting forwards*. Brighton, XPS Ltd, 2004. 13.

To respond to this need, theatre for development has been adopted overwhelmingly as the most ideal tool that responds flexibly to these challenges. In fact, over the last decade, theatre for development has been used increasingly in Kenya as a tool for inspiring development at the grassroots level. This fact is discerned by O'Farrell who posits "...the arts in general and drama in particular have always played a significant role in both personal and social transformation..."⁷ Theatre for development has been proven capable of transforming communities because it offers a forum for discussion, analysis of issues and the search for solutions. The dialogue in theatre for development is cultivated through a participatory process between the actors and the spectators. The essence of this as Boal confirms is that it unearths the never ending desire among the masses to experiment and rehearse. He further notes that the preference among the spectators is to dialogue with the actors. This in a sense evokes in the spectator the desire to practice what they have rehearsed later in real life.⁸

Nonetheless, despite the increasing use of theatre for development as a tool for raising critical awareness, many methodological gaps are inherent. Of concern is the fact that the theatre practices of many NGOs and theatre groups have often

⁷ See O'Farrell, Lawrence. "*Creating our cultural identity*". In Drama, Culture and Empowerment. Eds. O'Toole John and Donelan Kate. Brisbane, IDEA publications, 1996. 126.

⁸ Boal is one of the pioneers of Theatre for Development worldwide. His arguments and practice are contained in his text, Boal, Augusto. "*Theatre of the Oppressed*". Trans. A. Charles and Leal Mc Bride. London: Pluto Press, 1979. Stanislavsky is a protégé of Aristotelian theatre that emphasizes the cathartic purge. He developed an acting technique that helps the actor summon the feelings of emotion that will lead the spectator into catharsis.

fallen short of triggering conscientisation.”⁹ The greater challenge being, theatre for development has a much greater potential which has not been unearthed. As validated by Ogolla “...some of the most celebrated theatre for development experiments have fallen short of genuine intervention in the people’s lives....”¹⁰

It is in response to these gaps that this study is founded upon Brecht’s concept of the alienation effect. As Brecht demonstrated

The theatre ought to empower man to critique society and among the effects that the theatre needs to outline this function is the alienation effect.¹¹The alienation effect changes the theatre from simple representation to striking commentary by breaking off from imitation and demanding explanations. Its achievement is by a combination of factors among them the actor, use of music, the setting, documentary projections and actors directly addressing the audience.¹²

For Brecht, the critical role of the theatre should be to trigger the spectator into deeper thinking and arouse the desire to take action.

These ideals are founded in Freires conscientisation paradigm that offers the conceptual framework within which I place Brecht’s alienation effect. Suffice it to say that the developmental notion being advanced by many NGOs using theatre

⁹ See Mavrocordatos, Alex. *Theatre and development*. KIT. 29th April 2004.

¹⁰ See Ogolla, Lenin. *Towards Behavior Change: Participatory Theatre in Education and Development*. Nairobi: Petad International, 1997. 19.

¹¹ See Brecht, Bertolt. “*Brecht on Theatre. The development of an aesthetic*”. Ed and Trans. Willet, John. New York: Hill and Wang, 1974. This book covers a collection of theoretical essays by Bertolt Brecht that span through his life in the theatre and how he came to develop his dialectical/epic theatre that emphasizes the alienation effect. The compilation was done after Brecht’s death from a collection of essays he had earlier written, some published and others unpublished.

¹² *Ibid.*, 29.

for development is premised on Freire's conscientisation. Freire connotes the need for people at the grassroots to understand the causes of their underdevelopment by presenting it as a problem. The underlying fact as Freire notes is that when one is "...increasingly posed with problems relating to themselves in the world and with the world, will feel increasingly challenged and obliged to respond to that challenge...the response to that challenge evokes new challenges, followed by new understandings.¹³ Freire's conscientisation paradigm offers a critical lens with which I analyze the appropriation of the alienation effect. This is because the conscientisation paradigm is the definitive framework for grassroots development, which theatre for development seeks to attain. Brecht's alienation effect therefore provides the tools for the realization of Freire's conscientisation framework.

Inaugural experiments that depicted the use of elements of the alienation effect within theatre for development settings were pioneered by Brecht's protégé, Augusto Boal. The success of Boal's experiments is what gave theatre for development prominence in interactive community theatre discourse. This study is largely attributed to the successful appropriation of elements of the alienation effect by Augusto Boal. The lessons I draw from Boal are acclaimed by O'Farrell who observes "...the alienation of an individual from the roles and activities that characterize their normal, everyday lives leads to an inclination to explore new

¹³ See Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. Trans. Myra Bergman Ramos, New York: The Sea Bury Press, 1973. 69.

perspectives through drama...”¹⁴ He further observes that experiences which have not been subjected to critical analysis cannot lead to action. As demonstrated in this study, the use of the alienation effect offers a platform for this critical analysis. This is because the alienation effect provides tools that ensure spectators are distanced from their status quo. These tools further trigger the spectators into critically analyzing their status quo, and thereby providing renewed experiences that ultimately lead to action. This study therefore analyzed the appropriation of Brecht’s alienation effect by *Amateur*, *Sanaa* and *House of Courage* theatre troupes, and the challenges arising thereof.

¹⁴ See O’Farrell, 127.

1.2. DEFINITION OF TERMS AND CONCEPTS

Alienation Effect: It connotes the use of theatrical effects and techniques that work towards minimizing empathy between actors and the spectators. This is because empathy often leads to a visualization of the enactment as reality hence blurring the spectators' critical nuances. These techniques make spectators aware that that they are watching an enactment of reality and not living reality by itself. These techniques include use of minimal props, indicative scenery, breaking action into open ended episodes, use of narrators to address the audience directly, use of quotable gesture, employment of stance, sudden behavioral shift, suggestion of the roads not taken in moments of decision making e.t.c.

Conscientisation: This term widely used by Paulo Freire in the developmental context means the active participation of a people in transforming themselves. It is largely dependent on participatory methodologies that promote dialogue. This is because communities need to dialogue and through that identify their problems and reflect on why the problems exist. The outcome is community engagement in decision-making on the course of action to take in order to solve the problems. Conscientisation is therefore the outcome of this process where a people emerge with a deepened attitude of awareness over a particular issue and a commitment to change. Many nongovernmental organizations spearheading grassroots development mainly rely on this ideal.

Development: This is a process through which grassroots communities achieve greater control of their social, economic and political destiny. The developmental

nexus for Kenya rests on eliminating poverty, illiteracy and disease through empowering the individual members of the Kenyan society and hence leading to their liberation from these forms of domination and dependency.

Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs): These are non profit making entities mainly engaged in civil society activities and focusing on development of the grassroots populations.

Practitioners: Individuals and theatre groups carrying out theatre for development programs.

Theatre for Development (TFD): The employment of a variety of theatrical expressions at grassroots level in a particular locale. Theatre is used to research and analyze development problems and create a critical awareness and potential for action to solve those problems. It is a theatre that is relevant to the people's life and struggles as opposed to the theatre of abstractions and entertainment. It thrives on the participation of the target communities in the development of critical thinking that stimulates resultant praxis.

1.3. Statement of the problem

Theatre for development has been increasingly adopted in Kenya as a tool for community empowerment and conscientisation. Reading the trends worldwide, the present theatre for development practices have largely proliferated from the inaugural experiments by Augusto Boal. Boal is admittedly a protégé of Bertolt Brecht and his theatre for development practice largely hinges on Bertolt Brecht's didactic theatre.¹⁵ In spite of the increasing use of theatre for development in Kenya, there is increasing concern over methodology and effect. This has been highlighted by several scholars among them Ngugi wa Thiongo, Christopher Odhiambo, Jane Plastow, Lenin Ogolla, Opiyo Mumma e.t.c. They all point out to numerous methodological deficiencies of the current theatre for development practice.¹⁶

In spite of the above, limited studies have specifically analyzed the utilization of Brecht's alienation effect in the theatre for development practice, and its potential significance for change. It is on this basis that this study investigated the appropriation of Brecht's concept of the alienation effect by selected theatre for development troupes in Kenya.

¹⁵ Boal's theatre for development experiments are adequately elucidated in his seminal work "*The theatre of the oppressed*". London: Pluto Press, 1979.

¹⁶ Consult the bibliography for details of their works.

1.4. Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are to:

1. Map out the use of theatre for development by nongovernmental organizations in Kenya.
2. Identify and evaluate the appropriation of Brecht's alienation effect by selected theatre for development troupes.
3. Assess the challenges theatre for development practitioners' face in appropriating the alienation effect.

1.5. Research Questions

This study sought to answer the following questions:

1. For what purposes do nongovernmental organizations employ theatre for development in Kenya?
2. Is Brecht's concept of the alienation effect appropriated by theatre for development troupes in Kenya?
3. What challenges confront theatre for development troupes that hinder their appropriation of the alienation effect in their theatre practices?

1.6. Rationale for the Study

In the quest to aid grassroots communities in their development efforts, many nongovernmental organizations have mushroomed in Kenya. Most of these organizations acclaim they are development oriented and portend to respond to

this lacuna. As a result, many have employed theatre for development as a tool for community empowerment and advocacy. Theatre is therefore acknowledged as a critical tool in this development discourse. In fact, theatre offers the entry point to the development process, as highlighted by Ewu “...it is indisputable that effectively used, theatre has a vital role to play in development and is usable at any and every stage of a development program.”¹⁷

Critical to this study is that whilst it is desirable to use theatre for development related gains, it is also important that what is practiced is focused and systematic. And most importantly that the methodology does not contravene the set processes as commonly understood. As many scholars among them Ogolla, Mda, Kidd & Byram, Byam, Mumma, Odhiambo e.t.c.¹⁸ have attested, a series of methodological gaps exist in the current theatre for development practices. The omnipotent gap in most of these theatre practices is that of methodology and effect. Whereas the theoretical models advanced by Brecht, Boal and Freire among other practitioners advocate for community participation and critical reflection, the practical reality on the ground has often reflected otherwise. Most outstanding is that the practices on the ground have pointed at different variations on methodology and practice.

¹⁷ See Jumai, Ewu. “*Arts and Development II: Prospectives through Theatre*”. This essay was presented during a Theatre for development workshop held in Ibadan, Nigeria in 1997 and appears in the text *African Theatre in Development*. Eds. Gibbs, Banham and Osofisan. Oxford: James Currey Ltd, 1999.

¹⁸ Consult the Bibliography for details of their works.

This study is derived from this background, on the understanding that this has limited substantial theatre for development practices from triggering consequential change in the beneficiary communities. As a result, this study defined the critical need to assess the effectiveness of the alienation effect in catalyzing conscientisation in the current theatre for development practice. By analyzing the appropriation of Brecht's concept of the alienation effect, this study offers a critical lens through which I have assessed the effectiveness of theatre for development. Through this, I have also analyzed the capacity of theatre for development troupes to appropriately interpret and apply the conceptual frameworks that define theatre for development practice.

1.7. Significance of the Study

This study provides an evaluative framework on the utilization of the alienation effect in theatre for development. This is based on Simala's assertion "... there is need to find a way of ensuring dramatists are equipped with the requisite skills to develop, deliver and manage the concept of theatre for development in a consistent and effective way."¹⁹ The findings will provide useful policy guidelines for government, nongovernmental organizations, social workers, stakeholders and other parties interested in theatre for development. On the other hand, theatre artists will gain a comprehensive insight into the state and impact of their theatre practice and hence pursue relevant avenues in strengthening their work.

¹⁹ See Inyani, Simala. *The Role of Local Languages in Community Empowerment and Sustainable Development*. In Mumma et al. Orientations of Drama, Theatre and Culture. Nairobi: KDEA, 1998.

1.8. Scope and Limitations

This study analyzed the theatre for development practices of three troupes, *Amateur*, *House of courage* and *Sanaa* theatre troupes. These three theatre troupes offered an interpretative grid upon which I draw my conclusions. In determining the sampling frame, it was evident that many theatre groups practising theatre for development were linked to non governmental organizations. The sampling frame was therefore mainly drawn from the many NGOs using theatre for development in Kenya. As a result, theatre troupes that could be practising theatre for development and were not necessarily allied to NGOs or community based organizations were possibly excluded from the sampling frame.

In determining the sampling frame, it emerged that many groups practiced theatre for development for individual projects that were managed by NGOs. As such many of these groups were mainly active during the life span of the projects. In the absence of any project, many of these troupes became moribund. Many would resurface with the coming on board of a new project. This also meant that the groups available for this study were those implementing active projects at the time of group selection.

Another critical realization was that many NGOs had national programs. Due to this, few disparities existed in some of the theatre practices which transcend across many groups countrywide. For instance both *Amateur* and *House of Courage*

implemented programs for the IMPACT project although in different geographical parts of the country hence a similarity in some of their theatrical practices.²⁰ This aspect of program similarities partly confined my scope due to a near duplicity of some of the techniques and approaches employed by the groups.

1.9. LITERATURE REVIEW

In this literature review, I attempt to draw the cause and course of this study. Through an analysis of related works by various scholars, I identified the gaps and opportunities in theatre for development practices. These are what necessitate the use of the alienation effect. The philosophical pillars for this literature review are derived from Freire's conscientisation paradigm. As Freire ascertains "...conscientisation is achieved through creating opportunities for the participation of individuals in determining their destiny through critical reflection."²¹

To facilitate conscientisation, the critical element espoused by Freire is dialogue. In this study, I argue that it is through appropriating elements of the alienation effect that dialogue is attained in theatre for development. These elements which are peculiar to the alienation effect are the elimination of the fourth wall, acting with minimal empathy, narration, and using open ended plays. All these are geared

²⁰ The IMPACT (Implementing AIDS prevention care and Treatment) project was implemented in Western, Coast and Rift valley provinces of Kenya at the time of this study. The project was funded by USAID and implemented by a consortium of partners led by Family Health International.

²¹ See Freire, 46.

towards facilitating more interaction between the actor and the spectators and thus dismantling illusion. This literature review therefore accentuates the alienation effect as a tool for catalyzing conscientisation in theatre for development. Using this literature review as a critical lens, I aim to sieve the problem and put it into more focus.

Mzo Sirayi identifies oral traditions as effective communication tools that can facilitate the development process. To Sirayi, creating a cultural identity is the most critical aspect. Since a people with a cultural identity have cultural forms of expression including dance, poetry, storytelling, songs e.t.c with which and in which they gain a sense of belonging and expression. Sirayi therefore notes that communities can identify their problems and through indigenous theatre address them.²² Much as indigenous theatre offers a forum for expression, I do not concur with Sirayi since exclusive use of indigenous performance modes is inadequate to promote conscientisation. Drawing from Mda's views, "...community members may participate in creating and performing a play, but this is not to say they become critically aware...."²³ Sirayi therefore offers a methodology that serves to increase community participation in theatre for development. Sirayi's approach however, does not build a forum for alienation and therefore conscientisation remains elusive.

²² See Mzo, Sirayi. *The impact of the cultural bomb in South Africa*. In Mumma et al. Orientations of Drama, Theatre and Culture. Nairobi: KDEA, 1998. 4, 38 and 45.

²³ See Mda, Zakes. *When People Play People; Development communication through theatre*. London and New Jersey: Zed Books, 1993.

Odhiambo views the theatrical space as “....the ultimate interactive paradigm of several theatrical elements; texts, playwright, performers, lights, sounds, backdrops, objects and audience.....” He further postulates “....spectators get deeply entrenched into the aesthetic nuances of the song and dance and not once do they prioritize the source of the material...in this sense the theatrical space becomes a ‘neutralizer’ of barriers, dismantling them....”²⁴ Much as the theatrical space should facilitate interaction in theatre for development, it should also widen the social divisions as Brecht advocates.²⁵ As it is evident in this study, the performance space should help permeate social divisions for an objective analysis of issues rather than dissolving social barriers as Odhiambo accentuates.

In looking at drama, Joe de Graft observes that “....the decision to enter into an act of impersonation is always a conscious one, more or less, requiring some kind of physical and psychological preparation. But the form of impersonation, in terms of what the impersonator does and how he does it, is sometimes not possible to consciously determine.”²⁶ De graft implies that in performance, one enters a trance and in that trance the actor has little control over what he does and how he does it. Proper acting according to De Graft is subconscious and the actor is often at the mercy of the performance and has little to control in terms of outcome. He further

²⁴ See C.J. Odhiambo. “*Dismantling Cultural/racial Boundaries: The power of the theatrical space.*” In *Drama, Culture and Empowerment*. Eds. O’Toole John and Donelan Kate. Brisbane, IDEA publications, 1996. 74.

²⁵ See Brecht, 72.

²⁶ See Joe De Graft. *Roots in African Drama and theatre*. In Eldred Jones, *African literature today*, No. 8, 1976. 5.

observes that “...when the form of the act of impersonation is determined by a conscious selection and shaping of creative elements, then drama begins to take on the lineaments of consciously ordered art; then we are set on the long road towards secular drama and theatre of pure entertainment.”²⁷

Similar views are echoed by O’Farrell who observes “...drama is like ritual where participants are transported from normal life and placed within a self contained non judgmental community where they seek alternative identities.....”²⁸ Both O’Farrell and De Graft view drama as a subconscious act. The challenge however, is that a performance that relies on the subconscious promotes illusion. Theatre from this perspective essentially leads to Aristotelian catharsis, and by extension this theatre serves a purely entertaining role. On the contrary a theatre that seeks to objectively analyze issues and promote critical reflection must be consciously ordered.

Alex Mavrocordatos identifies the major challenge facing theatre for development as being the lack of the voices of the common man or the beneficiary communities in the issues being addressed. He recommends the use of participatory performance practices that integrate participatory rural appraisal techniques into theatre for development. Through this approach, the views of the community form

²⁷ Ibid., 6.

²⁸ See O’Farrell, Lawrence. *Building a better world through drama education; educational drama as a catalyst for cultural identity and community development*. In Drama, Culture and Empowerment. Eds. O’Toole John and Donelan Kate. Brisbane, IDEA publications, 1996. 8.

part and parcel of the story being told. The process also seeks to explore full engagement with local culture. From his study, Mavrocordatos focuses more on content yet content is subservient to form as a critical determinant of the effectiveness of theatre for development.²⁹

The role that theatre plays in the development process has been clearly summarized by Crow and Etherton who note that as entertainment, theatre is able to hold the attention of many people and as a dramatic way of presenting problems it makes the audience see these problems in a fresh and critical way.³⁰ The two authors however note that the greatest danger that theatre faces is turning into an entertainment forum that spurs little developmental potential. The inadequacy of the theatre performance to respond to the developmental dimension as they posit is based on its inability to engage the audience in the theatre process. Beyond offering the theoretical criticism, the two authors do not offer the practical methodology that should help unearth the development dimension of theatre.

Drawing from Brecht's concept of scripting, the plays used in theatre for development should be open ended and problem posing in nature. But then narrating his experiences on a theatre for development practice in Chalimbana,

²⁹ Alex Mavrocordatos. *Theatre for Development: Top down product or participatory process*. In E Civicus, Edition 159, 26 April – 2 may 2002. 5 - 6.

³⁰ See Crow and Etherton "*Popular Drama and Popular Analysis in Africa*". This essay appears in a collection edited by Ross Kidd and Nat Colleta, Tradition for Development: indigenous structures and folk media in non-formal education cited in the bibliography.

Zambia, Kerr observes that “...in five movements, the play with the theme of poor water supply which the research revealed to be a major problem. The story dealt with a man suffering from gastric complaint caused by dirty water. After rejecting a false, mercenary spirit medium, the man goes to a clinic from where he is transferred to the main hospital in Lusaka. He returns triumphantly cured; the villagers dig a clean well and celebrate...”³¹ This performance was closed ended in nature and did not pose the issues as problems. This play, which happens to be a metonym of other theatre for development practices, did not facilitate critical analysis of the issues in performance. As Kerr observes, a number of theatre for development practices have adopted similar approaches, with minimal analysis of issues, which I note to be a critical requirement in theatre for development.

Sim and Drew acknowledge that donors who support theatre for development programs have their own underlying ideological and cultural agenda. In spite of the validity of the messages, they are often defined by top down processes and lack dialogue with the community. The mode of delivery is by a drama performance and the solutions are expressed by song, dance, mime, posters and props.³² It is evident from these two authors that one of the major challenges in theatre for development is that of control over form and its effect. Whilst it is

³¹ See Kerr, 155.

³² See Sim, Godfrey and Drew, Janice. *Awareness theatre*. In Drama, Culture and Empowerment. Eds. O’Toole John and Donelan Kate. Brisbane, IDEA publications, 1996. 186.

desirable to use the commonly utilized performance modes, there is need to interrogate control over the medium of communication.

Jumai Ewu concedes that the primary objective of theatre for development is to encourage community participation and dialogue in development.³³ He stresses that community participation in theatre for development becomes symbolic of and catalytic to development. Ewu's assumptions however, limit the effectiveness of theatre for development to the level of community participation. This view sidelines other critical factors such as critical reflection and analysis of issues. As Kidd and Byram note, participation in performance is not enough guarantee of progressive change.³⁴ This is further elucidated by Mda who observes that community control on its own does not guarantee that progressive change will happen. He notes that theatre is not a self generative communication medium that automatically becomes effective. For theatre to be effective and facilitate progressive change then it needs informed intervention.³⁵

According to Peninah Mlama "...popular songs, poetry, dance, and drama have been employed by the struggling masses to vent their anger or to inspire the struggles and boost the morale of the participants as well as to conscientise them

³³ See Ewu, Jumai. "*Arts and Development II; Prospectives through Theatre.*" in Banham et al. Eds. *African Theatre in Development*. Oxford: James Currey limited, 1999. 89.

³⁴ See Ogolla, 19.

³⁵ See Mda, 174 & 186.

for the right causes.....”³⁶ Mlama further points out “.....use of peoples own art forms produce the most effective participation from members of the community.....”.³⁷ Essentially Mlama builds up a case for community participation in theatre for development through popular theatre. A view that is similarly upheld by Ogolla who notes that theatre for development definitively is an amalgamation of very fluid and popular performance genres like song, dance, mask and rituals. These forms as Ogolla attests, are familiar to the particular community and ordinary people in the community recognize and are comfortable to take part in the performance.³⁸ While community participation is essential, it is inadequate to trigger conscientisation in theatre for development.

The relationship between the theatre group and the community is a crucial factor in theatre for development as Kerr observes. Kerr notes that it is difficult to use theatre as a radical tool of conscientisation as long as some of the catalysts analysis remained outside the community.³⁹ Mda however notes that communication between the catalyst and the rural community members can be made effective only if the catalysts have a greater level of empathy than the villagers. Mda further notes that to create critical consciousness, the actor does not need to have a similar class determinant to that of the audience, but does need

³⁶ See Mlama, 33.

³⁷ Ibid., 85.

³⁸ See Ogolla, 18.

³⁹ See Kerr, 170.

empathy.⁴⁰ These scholars place a greater premium to empathy which as I have stated in this study, promotes illusion and inhibits conscientisation.

Mlama too observes “... art is a form of persuasion and hence has the power to modify conscience and to influence belief. The persuasive effect of art is maximized when the audience responds to its value or is compelled to accept the feelings, ideas and characters portrayed. The work of art tends to influence its audience to active acceptance or rejection. The audience internalizes the various experiences conveyed, which in turn modify consciousness and existing attitudes”.⁴¹ Mlama too emphasizes upon empathy which leads to illusion, denying theatre for development the critical nuances.

From this literature review, it is evident that many scholars place premium on community participation, space, empathy and ritual as significant transformative elements. Nonetheless, on the basis of Brecht’s alienation effect and Freire’s conscientisation paradigm, these elements provide little stimulus to critical reflection. Considering that Freire espouses dialogue and critical reflection as the essential elements for conscientisation, there is need for a deeper interrogation with these concepts. The review of relevant literature further revealed limited studies on the use of the alienation effect in theatre for development hence giving impetus to this study.

⁴⁰ See Mda, 87.

⁴¹ See Mlama, 24.

1.10. Theoretical Framework

Brecht's concept of the alienation effect provides the main theoretical framework for this study. Brecht's theory is however hinged on Freire's conscientisation paradigm, which offers the structural framework for the alienation effect. This study therefore draws its theoretical paradigm from Bertolt Brecht and additional theoretical underpinnings from Paulo Freire.

In this study, development is contextualized within Freire's conscientisation paradigm. I have therefore defined the ultimate mark of development as attaining Freire's conscientisation. According to Freire, conscientisation (read development) is attained when dialogue prevails among the oppressed. Freire notes that dialogue often promotes critical reflection, raising a people's critical consciousness, and thereby catalyzing conscientisation.⁴² But then despite the fact that Freire's theoretical underpinnings define the structural framework for this study, they are located within adult education principles. As a result, the conscientisation paradigm lacks the tools of analysis that can be applied within a practical theatre for development setting.

Brecht's alienation effect therefore provides the tools of analysis with which I evaluate the facilitation of dialogue in theatre for development. I argue in this study that it is through Brecht's alienation effect that theatre for development is

⁴² See Freire, 96.

able to attain Freire's conscientisation. The analysis and interpretation of data on the alienation effect was therefore pegged towards attaining Freire's conscientisation paradigm. According to Brecht, the alienation effect is simply a process by which a theatrical performance is planned in order to induce a critical attitude among the spectators.⁴³ This is contrary to Aristotelian theatre where acting is by means of hypnosis, illusion and catharsis.⁴⁴ As such unlike Aristotelian drama that lets the spectator take on a complacent role, the alienation effect helps the spectator to understand the environment and to master it both rationally and emotionally.⁴⁵

In tandem with Freire's problem posing pedagogy, Brecht notes that characters and incidents from our immediate surroundings, being familiar, strike us as more or less natural. The alienation effect draws the spectator's attention and portrays human incidents as striking in order to allow the spectator to criticize constructively. It changes the theatre from simple representation to striking commentary by breaking off from imitation and demanding explanations. Through alienation, spectators can be moved from their immersion in the culture of silence

⁴³ See Brecht, 123.

⁴⁴ Catharsis which is a key element of Aristotelian theatre emphasizes the need for the performance to induce an emotional intoxication among the spectators that leads to an emotional orgasm. This is contrary to Brecht's ideals, See John Willet, *Brecht on Theatre*, Ed and Trans by John Willet, Hill and Wang, 1974.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 92.

into taking action to transform their social being. The elements that define this dialectic between Brechtian and Aristotelian theatre are reflected hereunder.⁴⁶

Aristotelian Theatre (Stanislavskian acting)	Brechtian Theatre (alienation effect)
The play works from a plot	The play works through narrative
Performance implicates the spectator in a stage situation and wears down his capacity for action by providing him with sensations	Performance turns the spectator into an observer but arouses his capacity for action and forces him to take decisions
Performance thrives on suggestions	Performance thrives on argument
One scene makes the other in the play	The play has independent scenes
The human being is taken for granted and is unalterable	The human being is the object of the inquiry, he is alterable and able to alter
Man as a fixed point eyes the end	Man as a process eyes the course
The spectator is in the thick of things	The spectator stands outside and studies
Linear plot development	Plot develops in curves
Thought determines being	Social being determines thought
Appeal to feelings	Appeal to reason

*Figure 1.1. Elements of Aristotelian and Brechtian Theatre*⁴⁷

⁴⁶ See Brecht, 83.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 37.

The tools with which to realize the alienation effect include keeping stage sets simple/use of minimal props and indicative scenery, showing exposed lighting instruments or flooding the stage with harsh white light. It also requires the breaking of action into open ended episodes and the suggestion of the roads not taken in a moment of a characters decision making. In addition is the use of a narrator or actors to directly address the audience. Other features are the use of repeated action to sum up a character, quotable gesture, sudden shifts from one behavior to another to put the audience off balance, intentionally interrupting the action at key junctures with songs in order to drive home an important point or message and projecting explanatory labels or photographs on a screen during scenes or employing placards.

From this wide range of techniques, I examined the appropriation of four key elements of the alienation effect. These were the performance space, scripting, acting and the use of a narrator. The critical task was to investigate the appropriation of these techniques within the theatre for development practices of *Amateur*, *Sanaa* and *House of Courage* theatre troupes. I assessed these techniques in the context of Freire's conscientisation paradigm.

According to Brecht, the alienation effect demands the use of open ended plays.⁴⁸

The plays should have loose knots which enable the development of the plot in

⁴⁸ See Brecht, 63.

curves. Critical to Brecht is a play that facilitates the audience to stop it at any juncture and seek answers to the problems posed by the play. This was the key concern in scripting. Additionally, was the need to promote dialogue that leads towards critical reflection. This was to be actualized through a narrator who would facilitate interaction between the actors with the audience. I therefore analyzed the appropriation of the concept of narration/facilitation to enhance the interaction between actors and spectators.

More often than not, the performance space has often been used to promote illusion through the make belief element of scenery. Critical to the alienation effect is that the stage should be left bare and should not be indicative of any particular scenery. This demands use of plain white light if possible and minimal use of props to eliminate the fourth wall concept. I therefore analyzed the nature of the performance space in promoting these elements of the alienation effect. I also looked at acting where Brecht advocated for minimal illusion in acting through limiting empathy in the performance. This was mainly through the actors directly addressing the audience, the use of repeated action to sum up a character and quotable gesture. This was also achieved through avoiding completely getting into character and giving cues to the audience that the actor is in a performance mode.

1.11. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study critically appraised the appropriation of the alienation effect by selected theatre for development troupes in Kenya. Using purposive sampling, I identified ten theatre troupes through contact with PATH.⁴⁹ Using snowball sampling, I was referred to additional theatre groups either by staff from PATH or by the theatre troupes identified through PATH. I also identified the theatre troupes through other NGOs and through government records in the Ministry of Culture and Social Services.⁵⁰ This was through purposive and snowball sampling. Additional groups were indentified through library research. In total, I identified sixty theatre troupes that were scattered across the country.

Through conducting a background search on the sixty theatre troupes, it emerged that only thirty of the groups were active at the point of research. Further follow up revealed that only fifteen engaged specifically in theatre for development. The rest focused on conventional theatre or other forms of community theatre. To accommodate regional diversities that would have otherwise influenced similarity of the theatre practices, I used cluster sampling. I sampled the fifteen theatre troupes into three geographical regions namely Coast, Nairobi and Western regions. Five of the theatre groups were from Nairobi, six from Coast and the

⁴⁹ The Program for Appropriate Technology in Health (PATH) is an International nongovernmental organization based in Nairobi but with countrywide programs dealing with several health aspects. The organization is acclaimed with the innovation of Magnet Theatre, a theatre for development form practiced by a number of theatre for development troupes in Kenya.

⁵⁰ The Ministry of Culture and Social services is a government department that officially registers any organized community groups including youth groups and community based organizations.

remaining four from the Western region. From this sampling frame, I prepared a table that listed the theatre groups in the three clusters. I then randomly picked one theatre troupe from each of the clusters. With the need for an in-depth critical appraisal of the theatre techniques over a series of performances, I limited the final sample to three theatre groups. It is on this basis that this study specifically focused on three theatre troupes' namely *Amateur*, *Sanaa* and *House of Courage* theatre troupes.

The main source of data collection was through participant observation, where I attended and took part in nine theatre performances. Three of the performances were by *Amateur theatre productions* in *Burumba*, *Marachi* and *Karibuni* in Busia District. I also attended three performances by *House of Courage* in *Bamburi*, *Mtopanga* and *Matingasi* in Mombasa District. And finally I attended three performances by *Sanaa* in *Ena* and *Kangaru School* in Embu District and a final one in *Miwani* in Machakos District.

I also collected data through interviews where I conducted both structured and unstructured interviews with members of the audience, the performers and theatre resource persons. I randomly sampled and interviewed six audience members in each of the performances by the three theatre troupes. I also interviewed six performers randomly sampled from each of the theatre troupes. Using purposive and snowball sampling, I interviewed five resource persons who were mainly

prominent, proficient, and approved theatre for development scholars, critics and practitioners. Additional data was collected through library research from library books, theatre journals, write-ups on theatre and various relevant articles by theatre critics.

The data collected was coded and analyzed through thematic data analysis. I classified and coded the data according to its significance to the four thematic prongs of the alienation effect in this study. These were performance space, acting, scripting and facilitation. I then drew summaries from the frequencies which signified intensity of the four elements in the data. From this, I identified the associations between the data and the four thematic prongs of the alienation effect. The summaries depicted the relationships between the data and the conceptual framework of this study. These were backed up with data from the library research. It is from these analyses that I drew my findings, inferences and conclusions.

CHAPTER TWO

DOCTRINES OF THEATRE AND DEVELOPMENT IN KENYA

It is a theatre that has just been born, and which, though breaking with all the traditional forms, still suffers from an insufficiently formulated theoretical basis. Only out of constant practice will the new theory arise.

Augusto Boal⁵¹

2.1. Introduction

This chapter focuses on the use of theatre for developmental purposes by highlighting some transformations of the practice in Kenya. I particularly conceptualize the developmental concept by NGOs and their use of theatre for development. I further highlight the definitive trends of theatre for development practice in Kenya. I similarly look at the renaissance in the early nineties that has significantly defined the direction theatre for development takes in Kenya today. Of special significance in this chapter is the discursivities of the development paradigm as understood and applied by nongovernmental organizations in Kenya today. It is this definition that underscores the use of theatre as a tool to promote development through nongovernmental organizations in Kenya.

2.2. Doctrines of Development

A common trait that commonly transcends many definitions of development as Walter Rodney points out is “.....more often than not the term development is used in an exclusive economic sense – the justification being that the type of economy

⁵¹ See Boal, 112.

is itself an index of other social features.”⁵² Such definitions have often limited the outlook to development as merely economic, ignoring the political, personal, social and cultural aspects. However, development is a more holistic concept which according to Rodney “...to be fully at home with development, one has at least to recognize the full human, historical and social dimensions of development.”⁵³ It is a social process which constitutes both the social, political, economic and other factors. Essentially, development represents positive change and transformation to better mans standards of living. Better still, it is a continuous process through which human beings themselves evolve in order to effect positive change in the social and physical environment. As Chambers posits

The objective of development is well-being for all. Well-being can be described as the experience of good quality of life. Well-being and its opposite, ill-being, differ from wealth and poverty.....Unlike wealth, well-being is open to the whole range of human experience, social, psychological and spiritual as well as material. It has many elements.....Perhaps most people would agree to including living standards, access to basic services, security and freedom from fear, health, good relations with others, friendship, love, peace of mind, choice, creativity, fulfillment and fun.....extreme poverty and ill-being go together, but the link between wealth and well-being is weak or even negative: reducing poverty usually diminishes ill-being; amassing wealth does not assure well-being and may diminish it.⁵⁴

In Kenya, concern over the country’s development has been the cornerstone of the post independence governments’. Immediately after the country gained independence in 1963, the first post independence government began put in place

⁵² See Rodney, Walter. *How Europe underdeveloped Africa*. Nairobi, EAEP: 1989. 10. See also Chambers, Robert. *Ideas for development: Reflecting forwards*. Brighton, XPS Ltd, 2004. 2.

⁵³ See Rodney, 21.

⁵⁴ See Chambers, 10.

measures that would help improve the socio economic conditions of its citizenry. The three milestones that the government sought to achieve were to eliminate poverty, illiteracy and disease. These were the critical elements that the government of Kenya earmarked in its development agenda for this country. Since then, the development agenda for Kenya has continuously been refined with time but still revolve around the three milestones. For instance the country's development agenda has of late been aligned to the millennium development goals.⁵⁵ The same agenda has further been refined by the government to respond to the present realities through launching various strategy papers such as the poverty reduction strategy paper that lay strategies for addressing the development agenda for this country.⁵⁶

In spite of all the interventions put in place, Kenya is still far from attaining the ultimate development mark. This is evident from the 2005 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) report which points out that 57% of the Kenyan citizens live below the poverty line.⁵⁷ In order to fill this lacuna, the government has often called upon its development partners to help in meeting the shortfalls. Development aid has therefore been central to improving Kenya's socio economic status. This aid has often been channeled either to the government through

⁵⁵ See www.UN.org/millenniumgoals

⁵⁶ See Government of Kenya, *Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper 2000 – 2003*. Nairobi: Government Printers, 2000.

⁵⁷ See UNDP, *Linking industrialization with human development*. Human Development Index Report for Africa 2004, 4th Kenya National report, Nairobi: UNDP, 2005.

bilateral agreements or directly to the grassroots through multilateral organizations. Bilateral aid accounts for 60% of all the aid given to Kenya while 40% goes directly to the grassroots mainly through NGOs that have mushroomed countrywide.⁵⁸ This percentage which is controlled by the NGOs goes directly to the source of problems and hence the NGOs have a major influence on the lives of grassroots communities receiving that aid. The nature of support granted by NGOs is well summed up by Hankook who notes

....in every poor country where a huge public infrastructure scheme is underway, a dam, a trunk road or a power station.....sanitation, water and sewerage works, ports and airports, trains and boats and planes, crop spraying, irrigation, rural health centers, the construction of classrooms, the construction of hotels, mining, prospecting, range management, livestock centers, cement factories, resettlement schemes, family planning programs, rural literacy programs, the provision of seeds, the provision of experts, debt relief, balance of payments support, technical cooperation, building railways, building bridges, institutional reforms, national planning, the construction of hospitals, the drilling of wells, teaching foreign languages, eradicating tse tse flies, expanding fisheries – in one way or another development inc plays a role in all these things, and in many more besides.⁵⁹

With many of these development projects being channeled to the grassroots communities, a lot of positive changes abound. That notwithstanding, the success of all these development efforts is pegged on community participation in the development process. It is in this regard that Freire's conscientisation paradigm finds root in the development discourse of these NGOs. The overriding concern as posited by Freire is such that "...to determine whether or not a society is

⁵⁸ See Hankook, 46.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 42.

developing, one must go beyond criteria based on indices of ‘per capita’ income (which, expressed in statistical form, are misleading) as well as those which concentrate on the study of gross income. The basic, elementary criterion is whether or not the society is ‘a being for itself’. If it is not, the other criterion indicates modernization rather than development.....”⁶⁰ Concern for any development worker should therefore not be based on economic growth solely but rather the holistic humanistic development of which economic development constitutes only a part.

To attain holistic development, the contribution of each individual community member counts towards the overall effect. By this avowal, the focus by many NGOs has been on the people who are the beneficiaries of the development efforts. Suffice it to say, blanket development does not work and therefore the convergence is on harnessing individual effort. As Chambers observes

.....most of what happens is the result of what sort of people we are, how we perceive realities, and what we do and do not do. Whether change is good or bad is largely determined by personal actions, whether by political leaders, officials, professionals or local people, by international currency speculators, executives of transnational corporations, non-government organization (NGO) workers, or researchers, by mothers, fathers or children, or by soldiers, secret agents, journalists, lawyers, police, or protesters.....⁶¹

In this regard, the determinant for overall development is the individual who is at the nucleus of any developing society. As Mavrocordatos posits, “...the first step

⁶⁰ See Freire, 160.

⁶¹ See Chambers, 12.

to development is a change of attitude, both individual and collective – and in that order – from declared helplessness to empowerment...”⁶² The will and input of the individual is therefore what counts, and collectively this is what ensures the development of the whole society. This is further accentuated by Rodney who connotes individual development to imply “.....increased skill and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self discipline, responsibility and material well being.....”⁶³ In concurrence, Chambers observes that individual development demands self-critical awareness, attitude and behavior change, which in turn have implications for policies and cultures.⁶⁴ Both these scholars point to the fact that development often commences from the individual and diffuses to the general society.

In lieu of the above, community empowerment has taken center stage in the development discourse of many NGOs. The essence being that empowered individuals are able to rally together and through inspiring their individual capacities transform the whole society and hence attain development. This is validated by Shaull who asserts

Every human being, no matter how “ignorant” or submerged in the “culture of silence” he may be, is capable of looking critically at his world in a dialogical encounter with others. Provided with the proper tools for such encounter, he can gradually perceive his personal and social reality as well

⁶² See Mavrocordatos, Alex. *Tied up in a rope of sand: TFD: Cultural action or development utility*. In *Theatre and Development Overview*. KIT, 29th April 2004.

⁶³ See Rodney, 9.

⁶⁴ See Chambers, 14.

as the contradictions in it, become conscious of his own perception of that reality, and deal critically with it.....⁶⁵

This is the corner stone of development efforts by many NGOs in Kenya on the premise that proper involvement of the people in the development process often results in conscientisation. A lot of the developmental channels being pursued by many NGOs therefore work towards empowerment of the people. Empowerment in Freirian terms connotes the need for the underdeveloped to take centre stage in the process and engage in conscious decision making. It is essentially development of the people hence the development initiatives must involve the people in the process. As Freire points out

When the power of decision is located outside rather than within the one who should decide, the latter has only the illusion of deciding.....It is obvious that only a society which is a “being for itself” can develop...if decision making power is located outside themselves then it cannot develop.....⁶⁶

Freire’s conscientisation paradigm has therefore greatly shaped the developmental work of many NGOs in Kenya. The critical factor is that community empowerment implies not only increased knowledge and skills but also increased community engagement in decision making. In rallying for this cause, theatre for development has increasingly gained strength and application as a tool for community empowerment, critical analysis and action. Its wider use is pegged on its ability to increase the knowledge and skills of community members on various

⁶⁵ See Shaull, 13.

⁶⁶ See Freire, 159 – 161.

issues as well as increasing community involvement in decision making. Most of these strengths are derived from Freire's conscientisation paradigm where theatre for development draws its conceptual framework. I draw significance from his concepts of problem posing pedagogy, dialogue, critical reflection, codification and ultimately conscientisation. These are the significant elements that inform my analysis of the developmental efforts by many NGOs in the context of theatre for development.

2.3. Foundations of Theatre for Development in Kenya

Theatre for development has for a long time been used for community development programs. The roots of theatre for development in Kenya and Africa can be traced back to the colonial era. According to David Kerr, the history of theatre for development in Africa has colonial ties in that "...theatre for development in the colonial period tried to solve a fundamental contradiction in the modes of informal adult education".⁶⁷ This was increasingly due to recognition of the inadequacies of the conventional modes of adult education. Kerr further points out that mainly the colonial agricultural agencies realized "...among a largely illiterate peasantry techniques such as lectures and written explanations had very limited use.....a few imaginative colonial development officers and extension workers went a stage further by introducing the notion of local language

⁶⁷ See Kerr, David. *African Popular Theatre from Pre-colonial times to the present day*. Oxford: James Currey Ltd, 1995, 31.

improvised drama”.⁶⁸ Within this setting, experimentation with theatre techniques was essential to ensure critical information particularly on agriculture was passed to the largely illiterate masses. This was necessitated by the need to transform the largely peasant African farmers into large scale and cash crop farming and also to convince them to adopt modern farming methods.

In this case therefore, the choice of theatre as an appropriate communication medium was precipitated by its ability to reach subaltern audiences hence overcoming the barriers of illiteracy. Kerr further attests that the acceptability of theatre was induced by its use of local languages. Similarly by embedding locally accepted cultural values and artistic forms which ensured ownership and acceptability. Moreover the aesthetics of the performances cultivated through its edutainment element made theatre a very appealing communication tool to the colonial communicators. Most important as Kerr points out is that these primordial experiments “...were colonial embryos of a theatre technique which in the post independence period was to be called ‘theatre for development’.”⁶⁹

With the onset of the post independence era, many African states continued using theatre as an instrument for communication. This was in lieu of the fact that many people were mainly illiterate hence needed a tool that would suit them for basic education purposes. Countries such as Nigeria, Ghana and Sierra Leone were on

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

the forefront in using theatre as part of their development media packages to reach out to the remote target audiences.⁷⁰ These countries used theatre to address health, agriculture and birth control among other key concerns from the community's perspective. In Kenya, the Kamiriithu theatre is one such example of the use of theatre for development related gains.⁷¹ As Ingrid notes in his account of the Kamiriithu theatre "...I shared in their discovery of their collective strength and abilities, and in their joyous feeling that they could accomplish anything – even transform the whole village and their lives.....many Kenyans in the audience found it difficult to differentiate between fiction and reality, and the division between actors and the audience disappeared and all were transformed into one assembly struggling for freedom and equality."⁷² The Nairobi University Free Travelling Theatre (FTT) also gained prominence in experimenting with theatre for development in the immediate post independence era.

2.4. Theatre for Development Renaissance

The political trends in Kenya have played a significant role in determining the course of theatre for development. This is evidenced by the post independence

⁷⁰ These African states carried on with the tradition of colonial didactic theatre on topics such as health, agriculture and birth control through theatre which was viewed as another mass media that complemented radio and cinema. See Kerr, 149.

⁷¹ Faced with unwitting oppression by multinational companies, the people of this small remote village in central Kenya founded a people's theatre with the help of university scholars Ngugi wa Thiongo and Ngugi wa Miiiri. This was the first people driven Theatre for Development practice that was later banned and the premises razed down to ashes by the then ruling regime who felt the theatre was raising the people's consciousness to challenge the ruling regime. As a result other similar theatres that had begun mushrooming up elsewhere in the republic slowly fizzled out. See Ngugi wa Thiongo. *Decolonizing the mind; The Politics of Language in African Literature*. Nairobi: EAEP, 1981.

⁷² See Bjorkman Ingrid. *Mother Sing for Me; people's theatre in Kenya*. London and New Jersey: Zed Books Ltd, 1989.

Kenyan governments' of between 1963 and 1989 which sought to consolidate political power. With that in mind, the country's democratic space was enclosed and the government stifled any perceived radical shifts and dissident thoughts, including theatre, which appeared to threaten or undermine the status quo.⁷³ The trends were however reversed with the repeal of section 2A of the constitution in 1990.⁷⁴ This change of the constitution which transitioned Kenya from a one party state to a multiparty democracy opened up the democratic space and expanded the freedom of expression. This presented a unique opportunity that many nongovernmental organizations did not let go untapped. The immediate implications were the accompanying influx of donors into the country, which gave way to the mushrooming of many NGOs. Apparently many NGOs with a keen interest in grassroots development joined the fray.

A great turn around in the use of theatre for development purposes was thus realized with this opening up of the democratic space. In this context, theatre for development was reignited as a tool for community education and empowerment. With the clamor for multiparty democracy, one aspect that propelled theatre for development was that many NGO's found theatre to be an ideal tool with which to conscientise the masses. This democratization process ran concurrently in many

⁷³ See Ngugi wa Thiongo. *Decolonizing the mind; The Politics of Language in African Literature*. Nairobi: EAEP, 1981. See also Ngugi wa Thiongo. *Detained; a writer's prison diary*. Nairobi: EAEP, 1981. See also Ngugi wa Thiongo. *Moving the center; the struggle for African freedoms*. Nairobi: EAEP, 1993.

⁷⁴ Pressure exerted both locally and internationally through several politicians and activists with support from some foreign governments led to repealing of the constitution from a single party rule to multiparty democracy.

states as Kerr concurs "...as the process of African liberalization which emerged in 1990 grew deeper roots, with its emphasis on civilian rule, multiparty democracy and human rights, the need for a less populist, more participatory theatre gained increasing strength."⁷⁵ The renewed use of theatre for development ran concurrent with the influx of NGOs since the practice had gained ground. Many NGOs therefore adopted theatre for development as an ideal tool for communication with the rural grassroots communities.

The increased adoption of theatre for development is discerned by Ogolla who posits "...today, many development workers especially in the donor supported nongovernmental organizations have a fair sense of the power of drama and theatre...."⁷⁶ Many of these NGOs have focused on reaching out to the grassroots communities deep in the hinterland through theatre. As a result, theatre for development has of late become synonymous with nongovernmental organizations in Kenya. The biggest dilemma however is that with these NGOs having the controlling interest in the genre, concerns over quality and ethics came into the limelight. It is in the light of this that Malamah posits

It is an indisputable fact that if effectively used, theatre has a very central role to play in development communication as it is recognized as being one of the most effective and far reaching social instruments because it has direct contact with the people at the grassroots.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ See Kerr, 209.

⁷⁶ See Ogolla, 27.

⁷⁷ See T. Malamah, and D. Henry. *Innovative Community Theatre for Integrated Rural Development in Sierra Leone: The Telu workshop experience*, in IFDA Dossier 70, March/ April 1989.

Theatre for development has therefore become critical to the masses, many of whom want a platform from which they can address their issues. They find solace in theatre for development as it gives them a voice with which they can freely air their views without the fear of victimization and together chart their own destinies as a community. As Chamberlain observes “....community theatre changes the people’s perception which does not simply mean raising awareness but rather allowing the community to examine their attitudes towards the unresolved dilemmas and contradictions presented in the drama which reflects their lives.....”⁷⁸ Most important is that as theatre is used to advocate for change and encourage communities to take up positive action, that theatre adopts the right methodology and skills.

2.5. Theatre for Development and Conscientisation

Many scholars have pointed out to the failure of many development initiatives to create meaningful change in the lives of the beneficiary communities. According to Ogolla “....there is still a wide discrepancy of theatre for development skills in the East African region...”⁷⁹ In lieu of this, theatre for development in its present form has failed to create significant change in the lives of the communities concerned. This has necessitated the restructuring of the approaches used in theatre for development. The basis for this being, the success of development

⁷⁸ See R. Chamberlain, M. Chillery, L. Ogolla and O. Wandera. *PET for HIV/aids awareness in Kenya*, PLA notes, Issue 23, IIED London, 1995. 69 – 74.

⁷⁹ See Ogolla, 19.

communication lies in empowering people through their direct participation in the decision-making process. As Simala attests, this empowerment process demands that the communicators “.....use appropriate forms in appropriate ways or else the use of inappropriate or inaccurate forms militates against communication even when it does not totally prevent it...”⁸⁰

It is on this basis that theatre for development is structured upon Freire’s conscientisation paradigm. According to Freire, change occurs only where dialogue prospers. Whereas to promote dialogue, there is need to adopt a problem posing methodology. This involves an in-depth analysis of the causal factors from the target community’s perspective. This therefore implies community participation in identification and codification of the community’s problems.

Nonetheless, Mda notes that community participation alone may not lead to conscientisation unless there is intervention through critical analysis.⁸¹ Critical reflection comes about when the community participates as active subjects in decoding their problems in the performance. This will ultimately lead to critical reflection and thereby catalyzing change. The key aspect being the theatre should facilitate dialogue that will enable the audience to name their problems, reflect and analyze why those problems exist and seek for solutions that they will later

⁸⁰ See Inyani, Simala. “*The role of local languages in community empowerment and sustainable development*” in Mumma et al. *Orientations of Drama, Theatre and Culture*, Nairobi, KDEA, 1998.

⁸¹ Intervention implies the role played by the facilitator in guiding the theatre process into critical reflection and enquiry.

implement. The essence according to Brecht is that the theatre has to wring from the spectator not cathartic tears, but decisions whose effect will be felt after he has left the theatre if it is to serve a meaningful role.⁸² For this to be realized, the theatre should appeal more to reason rather than to the spectator's feelings.

In this study, I substantially drew a lot from Augusto Boal. Boal is a protégé of Brecht and his inaugural theatre for development experiments significantly inform this study. Boal's theatrical practice(s) have similarly been influenced and informed by the works of Paulo Freire over time. This further provides us with a sphere with which to test Freire's hypothesis. Boal's seminal work, the 'Theatre of the oppressed', from which I draw reference, intertextualizes Freire's "*Pedagogy of the Oppressed*" and Bertolt Brecht's own learning theatres. His inaugural experiments transformed the landscape of theatre for development by completely subverting the audience – actor dichotomy. The application of the alienation effect in theatre for development is thus strongly rooted in Boal's practical experiments much as we draw from Brecht's theory.

In working towards conscientisation, Mda provides a basic leveling framework. Mda essentially classifies theatre for development into agitprop, participatory agitprop and theatre for conscientisation. From this leveling, Agitprop engenders little or no conscientisation since the audience does not participate in producing

⁸² Brecht, 25.

and distributing the messages.⁸³ This theatre is produced by an outside agent but oriented towards the people using the marketing approach⁸⁴. Participatory agitprop on the other hand ensures much more community participation than is the case with Agitprop. But then the control over the medium of articulation, in this case theatre, rests outside the community's powers. Theatre for conscientisation is however marked by two distinctive features namely community participation and intervention that both lead to conscientisation. In my analysis of the theatre for development practices, I inferred from Mda's leveling for an evaluation of conscientisation through the alienation effect.

2.6. Conclusion

This chapter looked at development and especially the use of theatre in development. Freire's conscientisation paradigm emerged as critical in spurring development and definitive of this study's broader operational framework. In my discourse, Brecht's alienation effect and Freire's conscientisation paradigm defined the theoretical guidelines of theatre for development with practical underpinnings from Augusto Boal and Zakes Mda. I similarly looked at the transformations of theatre for development in Kenya, with specific focus on the use of theatre for development mainly by nongovernmental organizations.

⁸³ Agitprop is a blending of the terms Agitation and Propaganda. This theatre originated from Brecht in a bid to supply communist propaganda that would agitate the masses against the Hitler regime.

⁸⁴ See Mda, Zakes. *When People Play People; Development communication through theatre*. London and New Jersey: Zed Books, 1993.

CHAPTER THREE

AESTHETICS OF THE ALIENATION EFFECT: AMATEUR THEATRE PRODUCTIONS

“Whereas banking education anaesthetizes and inhibits creative power, problem posing education involves a constant unveiling of reality. The former attempts to maintain the submersion of consciousness; the latter strives for the emergence of consciousness and critical intervention in reality.”

Paulo Freire⁸⁵

3.1. Introduction

Theatre for development has been widely adopted and used in Kenya as a critical tool for advocacy and catalyzing community action for development. In this chapter I analyze the appropriation of Brechtian alienation techniques by *Amateur theatre productions*, a theatre troupe contracted by a number of NGOs to implement theatre for development projects in Busia District. This is hinged to the discussions in the previous chapter, where I noted that the use of theatre for development in Kenya is mainly a domain of non governmental organizations. Using Brecht’s alienation effect as the analytical tools for this chapter, I analyze the theatre for development practice of *Amateur theatre productions*. This is on the premise that theatre for development draws its effect from Brecht’s alienation effect.

⁸⁵ See Freire, 152.

3.2. Amateur Theatre Productions Group Profile

Amateur theatre productions is a theatre group based in Busia District, of western province of Kenya. Founded in the year 2000, the group has implemented a series of theatre for development projects. In the course of this study, I found that most of the members of *Amateur theatre productions* had gained considerable exposure and experience in theatre for development. This was mainly through the implementation of diverse projects for many nongovernmental organizations. The exposure of *Amateur theatre productions* to this genre was driven by the fact that Busia District has for a long time been a centre of attention for many nongovernmental organizations. These NGOs have been addressing a host of issues in this border town ranging from education, health to peace and security. The group has worked with many of these non governmental organizations that had a keen focus on using theatre for development. As such the group particularly noted having worked with PATH, PSI, ARTNET, and IDEA on theatre for development.⁸⁶

⁸⁶ The Non Governmental Organizations listed above have implemented a series of Theatre for Development programs in Busia District. Program for Appropriate Technology in Health (PATH) implemented the Behavior Change Communication component through Magnet Theatre in the Implementing AIDS Prevention Care and Treatment (IMPACT) project. Population Services International (PSI) implemented a Malaria and HIV project targeted at increasing usage of SUPANET mosquito nets and TRUST condoms. Artists Network Kenya (ARTNET) also implemented a Theatre for Development program thematised on HIV and with a key focus on behavior change communication while International Drama/Theatre Educational Association (IDEA) mainly trained artists countrywide on Theatre for Development and Educational Drama in which some of the Amateur practitioners benefited.

The analysis of the four conceptual elements critical to this study namely performance space, the play, acting and narration are based on three performances I attended by *Amateur theatre productions*. These performances were held in three different sites in Busia District within the municipality. One performance was held at *Burumba* in June 2005, the second at *Karibuni* in June 2005 and the final one at *Marachi* in July 2005.

3.3. Performance Space

The performance space is a key element in every performance since it provides the forum for theatrical transformations to take place. This is accentuated by Odhiambo who posits

The very place of theatrical space in understanding the role of theatre can never be underestimated. This is because the essence of form in theatre is performance rather than the text: and as such theatrical space becomes the most important element. It is obviously an interactive and participatory medium; conciliatory and mediating as well as diverging and conflicting...to engage in performance is to make a choice. A choice that leads to the appropriation of space, a space where people construct their personal, social and cultural identities. To avail oneself to a theatrical space is to avail oneself to a change - a change of appearance of as a participant and also to some extent a change of behavior.⁸⁷

The performance space therefore offers a forum that facilitates interaction between actors and spectators thus leading to social change. In order to unearth this potential of the performance space to evoke change, Brecht demands that we do

⁸⁷ See C.J. Odhiambo. *Dismantling cultural/racial boundaries: The power of the theatrical space* in O. Mumma, E. Mwangi and C. Odhiambo. *Orientations of Drama, Theatre and Culture*, Nairobi, KDEA, 1998. 72

away with all illusionary aspects. Eliminating illusion in the performance space facilitates transformative metamorphosis by alienating the participants from their daily lives as Chamberlain et al note

Through the performance space, the participants are able to view themselves in the safety of an ‘other’. Instead of feeling exposed and vulnerable, as often is the case when we are being ourselves, under the guise and protection of a role we can express and explore our attitudes and emotions without fear of being laughed at.⁸⁸

The performances by *Amateur theatre productions* were all held in open air spaces within the community. The performances in all the three sites I visited in *Burumba, Karibuni* and *Marachi* were held in the middle of the shopping centers where many of the community members always gathered. The set up was such that the community members always surrounded the performers during the performance. Likewise the performance spaces were open and the community was free to walk in and out of the performance without causing disruptions or feeling tied down to the venue of the performance. All the three performance spaces were kept as informal as possible and since none of the performances were held in enclosed spaces, *Amateur theatre productions* successfully managed to do away with what Brecht terms as the fourth wall.⁸⁹ Through this open air staging in the shopping centers as depicted in the photos below, the performance spaces by *Amateur theatre productions* were freed from illusion.

⁸⁸ See Chamberlain et al. *PET for HIV/aids awareness in Kenya*, PLA notes, Issue 23, IIED London, 1995. 69-74.

⁸⁹ Brecht notes that the thinking of acting in an enclosed space, which ideally defines a room with four walls, limits the actor into thinking that he is not being watched and in a sense promotes the element of illusion. He advocates for the removal of this fourth wall by adopting more interactive seating arrangements in the theatre.



Amateur theatre productions performance in Burumba (Photo by Daniel Were)



Amateur theatre productions performance in Marachi (Photo by Daniel Were)



Amateur theatre productions performance in Karibuni (Photo by Daniel Were)

From the open spaces that *Amateur theatre productions* performed from, the positioning of the actors was such that they were easily visible and accessible to the audience. The audience in this case eliminated the illusion that they are the unseen spectators as the event took place.⁹⁰ The performances therefore cultivated the awareness of the actor that he is being watched and this in Brechtian terms removed part of the illusion that goes with Greek drama. Unlike conventional theatre performances where the actors often face only one or two directions that

⁹⁰ Brecht observes that acting from a proscenium stage presents the audience as one whole undifferentiated mass hence they are actually viewed as non-existent as the performance goes on since the focus is on the actors. He notes that focus should instead be on the audience who should be viewed as different individuals constituting the mass.

the audience is located, the performances by *Amateur theatre productions* had unlimited directions. As the community gathered for the performance, they created a circular arrangement by standing on the sides and the centre was reserved for the performance. Moreover there was no clearly discernible dividing line between the actors and spectators since the actors interchanged positions with the audience members hence rendering the actor – spectator dichotomy temporal. As Meyerhold notes

If it is true that artistic praxis is one of the vital components of human praxis as a whole, the spectators should by all rights take an active part in the performance. Dynamic staging allows them to do exactly that. Since there is nothing separating the spectators from the action being staged, it is possible for the actors to address them directly at times, and therefore the performance that takes place is the common creation of the actors and the audience.⁹¹

With this dropping of the fourth wall and the disappearance of the proscenium that divides the audience from the actors in the performances by *Amateur theatre productions*, it became possible for the actors to interact freely and directly with the audience. This direct communication between the actors and the community members encouraged community participation in the performance either by expressing their views or enacting behavioral options with the actors and other community members.

The performance sets were also free of any props as the actors relied mainly on improvisation. In fact the performance spaces were often bare on many occasions.

⁹¹ Brecht, 112.

This is another strategy that was employed by *Amateur theatre productions* that eliminated illusion. As Antoine argues "...dazzling sets were designed to deceive the audience into thinking a play better than it was. This leads to dramatic illusion, which ensures that the audience is completely convinced of the reality of the world of the stage and transported wholly into its sphere of influence..."⁹² Brecht too observes that the stage and the auditorium must be purged of everything magical and that no hypnotic tensions should be set up.⁹³ By performing in open spaces and minimizing use of props, *Amateur theatre productions* managed to attain the alienation effect through the performance space.

3.4. The Play/Script

The play is central to any theatre performance since in effect theatre is all about representing certain incidents on stage through a story. Everything therefore hangs on the story, which is the heart of the theatrical performance and its manner of presentation. *Amateur theatre productions* derived content for the stories they presented in the plays through feedback from the community during the preceding performances. The troupe devised its stories by harvesting contentious issues during the preceding outreaches and thereby devising storylines for use in the next performance. In accordance to the manner in which *Amateur theatre productions* derived stories for performance, Brecht alludes that it is the ordinary issues between human beings that supply material incidents for the story to be discussed,

⁹² Ibid., 134.

⁹³ Ibid., 175.

critiqued and altered.⁹⁴ He further remarks that the story is the greatest concept in theatre since it is the complete fitting together of all the incidents and embracing the communications and impulses that make up the audiences entertainment.

The scripts used during the performances by *Amateur theatre productions* presented varying dimensions with regard to the alienation effect. The performance in *Burumba* was a play whose thematic focus was on malaria. The play featured Jane, a mother with a five year old child, whose baby contracted malaria because she never took any safety precautions such as ensuring the baby sleeps under an insecticide treated mosquito net. On the advice of the neighbor, she was convinced on the need to frequently use an insecticide treated mosquito net. The play ended as she was heading to hospital for treatment and also to pick a mosquito net which is offered free of charge in hospitals. This performance by *Amateur theatre productions* in *Burumba* conformed to Agitprop characteristics and the play was presented as a finished product with no independent episodes. The challenge with this play was that it was closed ended in format. As such this performance did not conform to the alienation effect which advocates for problem posing plays. As Brecht notes "...plays should be loosely tied up in the sense that the audience is able to recognize the loose ends in the play..."⁹⁵

⁹⁴ Ibid., 112.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 134.

Contrary to the play used during the performance in *Burumba*, Freire observes that the play should facilitate codification of the community's problems. The codification of the community's problems involves presenting these issues as problems through open ended plays. Open ended plays are what trigger the community to commence critical reflection. As Freire observes

...spectators who are increasingly posed with problems relating to themselves in the world and with the world will feel increasingly challenged and obliged to respond to that challenge.....they develop their power to perceive critically the way they exist in the world with which and in which they find themselves....they come to see the world not as static reality but as reality in process, in transformation....⁹⁶

Essentially, the play used in *Burumba* did not code the community's issues as problems to be solved but highlighted the issues and went further to offer solutions on the same. This format adopted did not challenge the audience to view the issues as problems to be solved and therefore failed to codify the issues. The performance had limited opportunity of alienating the spectators from the performance and thereby catalyzing critical reflection and ultimately instigating change among the spectators. As Freire observes, codification goes deeper beyond just sloganeering to a critical analysis of a problematic reality.⁹⁷

Unlike *Burumba*, the scripts presented during the performances in *Marachi* and *Karibuni* had the individual episodes knotted together in such a way that the knots were easily noticed. The play presented in *Karibuni* featured a young girl who was

⁹⁶ See Freire, 65.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

still in college. The girl was sent back home for school fees one month before she sat for her final examinations and risked missing her exams if the fee was not paid. Unable to raise the money, the mother requested her daughter to forfeit the examinations until the following year. Being an obstinate girl, she sought for help from her friend who linked her up to a *sugar daddy*. The *sugar daddy* promised to pay all her pending school fess balance but on condition that she collects the money from his hotel room. Precipitating this request to be a possible sexual encounter in exchange for the favor, the lady was undecided. Ideally this script had three clear knots. The first knot was when the girl was chased away from college. The second knot was her mother's declaration that she could not raise the money for her school fees. The third knot was the demand by the *sugar daddy* that they meet in a hotel room to pick the money. It is these three loose ends that were knotted together to complete the story.

The performance in *Marachi* featured a young boy and girl in a relationship. Apparently they had long agreed to abstain from sex until marriage but the boy was under pressure from his friends. His friends pressurized him to have sex, failure to which he would be labeled impotent and isolated from his peers. His girlfriend, however, was not ready to give in to his demands that they engage in premarital sex based on their accord. The boy therefore insisted that the lady either agrees to his demands or they part ways. This play had two knots, the first being when the boy was being castigated by his friends to engage in sex with his

girlfriend. The second knot was when he was insisting to his girlfriend that they engage in sexual intercourse or part ways. All these were similarly independent scenes that were knotted to complete the story for that performance.

Unlike the performance in *Burumba*, the two performances in *Marachi* and *Karibuni* had episodes that were loosely tied up. The script gave the audience a chance to intervene through the independent knots. This way the actors did not feel disturbed at what Stanislavsky terms the mystic point of creation.⁹⁸ The plays performed in *Marachi* and *Karibuni* were also open ended and problem posing in nature which according to Kidd

It is the drama which is never finished, constantly being restructured to extend the insights of the participants. Nothing is presented as a final statement, each new scene is questioned, challenged and probed for deeper meaning.....there is a shift of emphasis from theatre as a finished product to theatre as a continuous and alterable product.⁹⁹

An additional feature was the alterability of the performances such that the audience could intervene and participate in the performance. This feature was discernible during the performances in *Marachi* and *Karibuni* that kept on changing time and again at the behest of the audience. The knots in these plays were depicted through dilemmas at the key dramatic moments. At these points, the play was stopped and the audience intervened in determining the course of the

⁹⁸ Stanislavsky notes that actors need to be carried away by the emotional demands of the play. They need to summon their emotions and enter into a subconscious trance where their actions are determined by their emotions rather than conscious rational thought. This point is what he refers to as the mystic point of creation. See C. Stanislavski, *An Actor Prepares*, New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1973.

⁹⁹ See Kerr, 161.

performance through the Boalian technique of simultaneous dramaturgy. The actors responded to these shifts by adjusting their performance to rally in tandem with the views of the audience. The performance in *Burumba*, however, was closed ended and did not incorporate the involvement of the audience as a critical factor in the performance. From the beginning to the end the actors performed the play with limited opportunities to spur audience involvement. The only involvement of the audience was at the end of the performance when the facilitator asked the audience if they had any questions. With none arising, the performance was wrapped up with virtually limited audience involvement.

The performances in *Marachi* and *Karibuni*, therefore, depicted the alienation effect. The performances in *Marachi* and *Karibuni* were problem posing in nature and therefore challenged the audience to respond to the issues depicted in the plays. The nature of these plays as I have shown above was such that they presented the community's issues through conflict between different characters in the play. The conflicts often developed into a climax with a dilemma, posing the problem to the community for action. This dilemma posing nature of the plays is what ideally alienated the audience leading them towards a critical and alienated comprehension. This technique provoked the audience to action and hence their ensuing response to these challenges is what evoked solutions. By and large this led to new understandings that guided the community's commitment to change and hence action for development. This process in the light of Freire's principles

enables the community to see the world not as static reality, but as reality in process, in transformation.¹⁰⁰

The plays used by *Amateur theatre productions* for the *Marachi* and *Karibuni* performances were structured on the basis that both the actors and the spectators were jointly responsible for a process in which they all grew. This was through presenting open ended plays that allowed room for discussion and dialogue between the actors and the audience. These intervention points in the plays enabled interaction and by and large the spectators became critical investigators of their situation since they were in dialogue with the actors. These plays attained the alienation effect by creating dialogue between the actors and spectators. The essence of this dialogue is that it challenged both parties and in so doing raised their perceptions, views and opinions about the world. Unfortunately the performance in Burumba did not live up to this and hence did not realize the alienation effect. It is in this regard that the renowned theatre for development scholar Ross Kidd remarks "...if people are left out of the action and dialogue in the play, it is difficult to turn them on like a tap when it's all over..."¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ Freire, 92.

¹⁰¹ See R. Kidd in D. Kerr. *African Popular theatre from pre-colonial times to the present day*, Oxford: James Currey Ltd, 1995. 161.

3.5. Acting

For theatre to serve as a tool for rational criticism, the greatest challenge is to work against empathy.¹⁰² The achievement of the alienation effect therefore demands the elimination of illusion which leads to empathy as echoed by Brecht

It is well known that contact between the audience and stage is normally made on the basis of empathy. Conventional actors devote their efforts exclusively to bringing this psychological operation.....the technique which produces the alienation effect is the exact opposite of that which aims at empathy.¹⁰³

It is however admissible that it is impossible to completely eliminate empathy from any performance. According to Bentley, Brecht does not eliminate empathy and illusion completely but reduces their importance by counterpoising them through deliberate distancing of the alienation effect.¹⁰⁴ My analysis here is then pegged on the achievement of this distancing effect that reduces empathy and illusion in the performances. In all the three performances by *Amateur theatre productions*, the action at the mobilization and ice-breaking stages were restricted to the performers with minimal involvement of the audience. With the audience occupying the outer performance space in a circular formation, the actors often formed an inner circle and performed several theatre games among themselves. As a result, the introductory elements of the performance had minimal interaction

¹⁰² Brecht observes that more often than not do actors enter into a state of empathy in the play and the same is translated into the spectator. The feelings, insight and impulses of the chief characters are forced on the spectators and so they learn nothing more about society than what they get from the setting.

¹⁰³ See Brecht, 136.

¹⁰⁴ See Bentley, 47.

between the actors and the spectators. This was an opportunity that if utilized would have helped in the realization of the alienation effect.

On the other hand, *Amateur theatre productions* managed to reduce the levels of empathy through the introduction of the performances. During the introduction of the performances in *Marachi* and *Karibuni*, the facilitator first and foremost introduced the troupe, the theme for the day, the synopsis and finally the actors. These introductions were very systematic and helped in eliminating the element of suspense as noted below during the performance in *Karibuni*

Good evening residents of Karibuni. This is Amateur theatre productions working for the IMPACT project and we are proud to be here again with you today. As usual we have brought you another performance and today we will be discussing the issue of sugar daddies. In our performance today, we talk about a young girl who is sent home from school because she has not paid school fees. The girl's mother is unable to raise the money for school fees but there is a sugar daddy who is willing to pay the fees for the girl. The challenge however is that the sugar daddy wants to have sex with the girl before he can pay the fees. This will be the key question for this performance where we shall be asking whether young girls should be having sex with sugar daddies in exchange for favors. To set the ball rolling, I will invite the actors here to introduce themselves.

This introduction eliminated the element of surprise since the audience was partly informed of what to expect. Suspense was also eliminated through the introduction of characters since the actors stated their character profiles and roles in the performances. Taking the example of the performance in *Marachi*, one of the actors introduced himself as follows

My name is Andrew but I will be acting as Leon in the play. My role will be that of a 23 year old young man with a girlfriend and I will be pressurizing my girlfriend to have sex with me in the play.

This introduction termed as rolling was simultaneous with de-rolling at the end of the performance where the performers underwent the same procedure. At the conclusion of the performance, they reminded the audience of their real names and distanced themselves with their characters in the play. For instance in the same performance in *Marachi*, the same character during de-rolling stated

I was acting as Leon in the play but my real name is Andrew. In my real life I don't always pressurize ladies to have sex like I did in the performance.

Through these elements, the performers informed the audience that they were entering and similarly leaving the fictional plane. Through applying this in the performances, they were able to realize the alienation effect concomitant to Brecht's observation that "the actor lets his character grow before the spectators' eyes...".¹⁰⁵

The performance in *Burumba*, however, did not follow the same procedure as the performances in *Marachi* and *Karibuni*. In this performance, the facilitator only introduced the troupe and the theme for the day and proceeded with the performance. The introduction for this performance unlike the other two did not

¹⁰⁵ Brecht, 56.

introduce the actors and let their characters be unveiled to the audience as the other two. The introduction ran as follows

Good morning residents of Burumba. We are from Amateur theatre productions and we have brought you a performance. Today we want to talk about malaria and how it affects your life. In order to do that I will invite you all to watch a performance after which you will be free to ask questions.

As such despite the fact that this introduction partly unveiled what to expect, it was not very detailed. The introduction did not unveil the characters to the audience to help eliminate illusion.

Another key element of the alienation effect is the demand that the actors address the audience directly and avoid getting into a trance in the performance. the actors need to control their thoughts and act without preliminary emotional preparation.

The onus then lies with the actors as Brecht asserts

This critical task demands that artists take part in the struggles, to find out the interests of the oppressed and represent them with a detachment that will invite critical reflection. The actor should of course not imagine the historical conditions as mysterious powers but on the contrary, acknowledge that they are created and maintained by men hence it is men who can and will in due course alter them. Because it is the actions taking place before us that allow us to see what they are, the actor must alienate the characters and events from the spectators.¹⁰⁶

Looking at the performance by *Amateur theatre productions* in *Burumba*, it was clear that there was little effort at improvisation. Much of what transpired was based on the rehearsed script prepared beforehand. This was reflected at the level

¹⁰⁶ See Brecht, 167.

of performance where there was very limited interaction between the actors with the audience. From the commencement of this performance to the end, there was little effort at audience involvement. At no given point did the actors interrupt the performance to seek audience engagement. Instead the actors performed right from the start to the finish after which the facilitator intervened to harvest questions from the audience regarding the performance.

Quite the opposite, the performances in *Marachi* and *Karibuni* exhibited more audience involvement. This was mainly heightened by the fact that despite their performances being rehearsed prior to the show, the actors relied a lot on improvisation during the actual performance. During these performances, the actors had more interaction with the audience during the facilitation stage as the community was exploring solutions to the dilemmas presented in the plays. During the encounter in *Marachi*, the employment of the technique of stepping into the shoes of the character enabled this fact. Here a member of the audience was called into the performance space to replace an actor and act out his suggestions. Apparently the facilitator sought to know from the audience what the character Leon should do because his friends were pressurizing him to have sex with his girlfriend yet he was not ready for that. One member of the audience opted to replace the actor who was playing the role of Leon and reenacted his opinion which was to abandon his friends since he can get others and stick with his girlfriend.

Similarly for the performance in *Karibuni* they also employed the technique of questioning a character in role. With the actor who was playing the role of the sugar daddy in the middle of the performance space, the facilitator gave the audience the opportunity to ask him questions that would help them understand his behavior. The actor in return responded to those questions on the basis of his character. Through these techniques, the audience was talking directly with actors and hence eliminating illusion from the performance. On these occasions, the actors let their character grow before the spectators eyes hence the creation of character was on the conscious and not on the subconscious. These techniques therefore made it impossible for the audience to identify with the characters in the play that would lead to catharsis. Such was in conformity with Brecht's view that catharsis is not the main object of this dramaturgy so is the identification of the spectators with the play.¹⁰⁷

The ability of these two performances in *Marachi* and *Karibuni* to attain the alienation effect, as stated previously, was largely catalyzed by well devised plays. As Brecht acknowledges, plays which had well developed conflicts and good dilemmas achieved the alienation effect more. This is because, the actors through their roles, simply represented the different social aspects in the plays. In fact the main aspect that these performances vivified was what Brecht termed as the actors

¹⁰⁷ See Brecht, 187.

remaining impersonal and rather representing a certain class or attitude.¹⁰⁸ The actors were therefore inviting criticism of the audience over the particular character they were portraying. Propelled by central divergent questions, the performance became a discussion about social conditions between the actors and the audience. For instance the performances in *Marachi* questioned the audience on whether it was proper for young people to engage in sex due to pressure from friends. The performance in *Karibuni* on the other hand questioned the audience on whether it was right for young girls to engage in sex with sugar daddies in exchange for favors. Through the plays, the actors polarized the members of the audience into taking sides with the issues at hand. The actors therefore allowed the existing divisions within the audience to continue and in fact widened them.

3.6. Narration

One imperative element that Brecht advocated for in minimizing illusion was direct communication through a narrator with the audience. According to Brecht, this would induce the alienation effect in the performance for critical reflection to prevail.¹⁰⁹ The role of this intermediary force according to Freire is to create, together with the spectators, the conditions under which knowledge is true knowledge.¹¹⁰ Brecht therefore emphasized on the need to use plays that portray

¹⁰⁸ Brecht observes that the representation of man on stage is inclusive of his rank and class in society and as such the actor therefore promotes his freedom in his relationship with the audience by treating it as a differentiated mass.

¹⁰⁹ See Brecht, 215.

¹¹⁰ See Freire, 53.

individual episodes knotted together in such a way that the knots are easily noticed. The individual pieces each communicate something on their own that ties up to an overall bigger theme that is depicted in the whole play. In order to tie up these pieces into a whole, a narrator was a necessary ingredient to direct the flow of the play. The narrator was also critical in ensuring that direct dialogue is maintained as Chamberlain *et al* observe

A facilitator acts like a bridge between the actor/teachers and the community to assist with their understanding and eventual participation. The facilitator's role is crucial in the steady development of the community's active involvement.....the facilitator's style must genuinely indicate at all times an openness, a humor, an egalitarianism and an unselfconscious lack of authoritarian status if he/she is to establish and then sustain a meaningful rapport with the community.¹¹¹

All the three performances by *Amateur theatre productions* vested this intermediary role on a facilitator although the outcomes were diverse. During the performance in *Burumba*, this facilitation role was visible at different stages of the performance. Immediately after the theatre troupe had mobilized a sizeable audience, the facilitator moved to the center of the performance space and introduced the troupe and their mission for that day which was essentially to present a performance on malaria. The facilitator then invited the actors to present the play and the enactment commenced.

At the conclusion of the performance, the facilitator requested if any of the audience members had any questions to ask the troupe on malaria. Since no

¹¹¹ See R. Chamberlain et al, 69 – 74.

questions were emerging, the facilitator gave a wrapping up summary insisting on the need for the community to use insecticide treated mosquito nets. He then thanked the community for attending the session and the performance ended there. This performance was basically Agitprop in nature in that the spectacle was presented as a finished product with no post performance discussions. At the end of the presentation the community was treated to a mini lecture. This performance by design basically disseminated the messages from the funding NGO without creating deeper critical awareness. The community had little leeway to offer their perspective on the issue hence resulting in a one sided communication as Sim and Drewe note

Essentially there is no dialogue with the people for whom these messages are intended. There is no real attempt at engendering community-initiated content arising from their specific issues, agenda or vision. This is clearly a process and model for telling - not listening and facilitating.¹¹²

The outcome of this performance in *Burumba* by *Amateur theatre productions* was therefore contrary to the alienation effect. As Hatar posits, theatre for development “...entails the target audience being the creators of the theatre, with the assistance of facilitators who are experts in the theatre methodology and the subject matter in question. The people talk about their problems as they see them from which a story is made....”¹¹³ Instead this performance conformed to Kidd and Byram’s

¹¹² See G. Sim and J. Drewe, 86.

¹¹³ See A. Hatar, *Theatrising Grassroots Concerns*, www.comminit.com: 2004.

notion that the performance was used simply as a mouthpiece to propagate the ideas of the NGO sponsoring it and not the issues affecting the community.¹¹⁴

Drawing from Freire's conscientisation concept, narration (read facilitation) enables decoding of issues and raises the community's awareness of their problems and possible solutions. According to Freire, a mere perception of reality not followed by critical intervention will not lead to a transformation of objective reality.¹¹⁵ In the context of theatre for development, decoding requires that the spectators with the aid of a facilitator move from the abstract to the concrete, from the part to the whole then returning to the part. From the performance in *Burumba*, the fact no dialogue was held with the community members at the end of the play implies there was no decoding of issues. Instead, facilitation which should constitute the bulk of the performance, and also the medium that guides the interaction with the audience in order to generate critical reflection was missing.

Emanating from Freire's ideals, the true measure of theatre for development should be its ability to enable the community to name, reflect and finally act on their problems. The naming process is what Freire terms as codification and is manifested in the plays which should be open ended and problem posing in nature. Unfortunately as we have noted previously, the performance in *Burumba* was not

¹¹⁴ See R. Kidd and M. Byram, *Demystifying pseudo-Freirian non-formal education: A case description and analysis of Laedza Batanani*, Toronto, Mimeo. 1981.

¹¹⁵ See Freire, 37.

open ended and failed to properly code the community issues. The performances in *Marachi* and *Karibuni* were open ended and problem posing hence managed to properly code the community issues. Considering that the decoding of issues is always a by-product of coding, quality of facilitation is therefore completely dependent on the quality of the plays used.

The performances in *Marachi* and *Karibuni* highlighted more involvement of the facilitator unlike the performance in *Burumba*. In these performances, the facilitator commenced by introducing the troupe, their mission for that day which was mainly to present a play with a problem that was to be discussed among the community members. The facilitator then introduced the actors and the performance of the play proceeded. When the play reached the dilemma point, the facilitator stopped the play and invited the audience for discussions. This was different from the performance in *Burumba* and was achieved through problem posing plays that provoked the audience. A case in point was during the performance in *Karibuni*, in which upon reaching the dilemma point

Facilitator: Should Kevin have sex as his friends are advising him or not?

Audience: (yes and no responses)

Facilitator: I want to see by show of hands who is saying yes and who is saying no

Facilitator: (to an audience member) What is your name?

Audience member: Japheth

Facilitator: Japheth, why are you saying that Kevin should have sex?

Japheth: Because if he doesn't he will lose his friends and they are more important to him than the girlfriend. He has been with his friends all through his life and he met the lady much later in his life.

Facilitator: Are you saying that since he met this lady much later and they have promised to marry each other she is not important.....

From the excerpt above, the role of the facilitator was more advanced than the performance in *Burumba*. While in *Burumba* the facilitator only sought to know if the audience had any questions relating to the play, in *Marachi* and *Karibuni* the audience had already been provoked by the plays. The role of the facilitator was therefore to extend the subdivisions among the audience members and to ensure discussion of issues and unveiling of reality continued among the audience members.

Working through the Boalian concept of forum theatre and simultaneous dramaturgy, the facilitator was critical in ensuring the flow of the plot of the play.¹¹⁶ During the performances in *Marachi* and *Karibuni*, the facilitator ensured audience involvement in dialogue and discussion on the issues unveiled through the performances. However, facilitation during the performance in *Marachi* was not very well executed and audience involvement fluctuated during the performance. During this performance, the facilitator was deficient of questions that would have maintained dialogue with the audience. After asking a few questions, the facilitator ran out of questions, got stuck and relied on prompting by other cast members to maintain dialogue.

Furthermore the discussion lacked a logical progression and was instead left at the behest of the audience. In spite of this, the facilitator during the performance by

¹¹⁶ See Boal, 109.

Amateur theatre productions in *Karibuni* ensured a constant interrogation of issues. This way the audience was not anaesthetized by the performance which according to Freire would have submerged their consciousness and thereby inhibiting their creative power.¹¹⁷ This is exemplified by Mda who argues that the community may participate fully in creating and performing a play, but this is not to say they become critically aware as part of the process.¹¹⁸ Mda identifies the crucial need for intervention through a facilitator to guide the process into critical reflection.

Looking at the performances of *Amateur theatre productions*, the role of facilitation was designated to individuals when the performances reached the dilemma points. The actors rarely played any facilitation role and were majorly confined to acting the play. When facilitation was in progress, the actors' mostly stood on the performance space or at other times left the performance space for the facilitator to interact with the community. Despite limited attempts by the actors to communicate with the audience directly in the course of the performance, the bulk of the interaction was between the facilitator and the audience rather than between the actors and the audience. Nonetheless *Amateur theatre productions* strove to involve the audience in a number of occasions in the performances. Partly audience involvement was at the mobilization and ice breaking stage but the bulk of audience involvement was during the facilitation stage.

¹¹⁷ See Freire, 76.

¹¹⁸ See Mda, 208.

To increase audience involvement, several techniques were put to use many of which helped enhance the alienation effect by ensuring rationalization prevailed. During the performance in *Marachi and Karibuni*, the facilitator mainly used the discussion method. Here the facilitator asked the audience questions relating to the performance and they offered their answers and suggestions in return and through this a discussion prevailed. The facilitator also employed the technique of stepping into the shoes of a character. The facilitator at particular points of intervention invited members of the audience to enact their suggestions by replacing a character in the performance. For instance during the performance in *Karibuni*, the facilitator asked one member of the audience what the school girl should do. The audience member in his acting proposed that the lady should lie to the *sugar daddy* that she is feeling unwell. This way he could pay for her the school fees and they could meet again in the hotel room at a later date.¹¹⁹ From these techniques, it was clearly evident that there were attempts at community involvement and interaction between the facilitator, the actors and the audience.

During moments when facilitation techniques were put to use, they improved interaction between the facilitator, the audience and the actors. This bolstered the work of the facilitator which was to promote dialogue. The performance by *Amateur theatre productions in Karibuni* managed to sustain dialogue between the actors and the audience, although the same was not adequately realized in

¹¹⁹ These techniques were mainly developed by Boal. See A. Boal, *Theatre of the Oppressed*. London: Pluto press, 1979.

Marachi. As Freire observes, once the facilitator sustains dialogue at all times then communication takes place. Furthermore it is only dialogue which requires critical thinking that is also capable of generating critical thinking.¹²⁰ *Amateur theatre productions* used a facilitator to guide the decoding process during these two performances in *Marachi* and *Karibuni*. These dialogic techniques led to critical thinking especially in *Karibuni* where they were optimally utilized. This by extension facilitated the decoding of reality and thereby realizing the alienation effect.

3.7. Conclusion

In this chapter, I looked at the appropriation of the alienation effect by *Amateur theatre productions*. I looked at four key elements of the alienation effect namely the performance space, acting, the play and narration. All the performance spaces used by *Amateur theatre productions* in *Marachi*, *Karibuni* and *Burumba* were open air and avoided illusion. The performance in *Burumba* fell short of the alienation effect with regard to the play/script which was closed ended. Similarly the acting did not facilitate interaction with the audience and neither did the facilitator/narrator achieve the same. On the contrary the performances in *Marachi* and *Karibuni* managed to attain the alienation effect in scripting and acting. The performance in *Karibuni* depicted the alienation effect in narration/facilitation unlike the performance in *Marachi* which had challenges in facilitation.

¹²⁰ Freire, 81.

CHAPTER FOUR

TOWARDS CONSCIENTISATION; HOUSE OF COURAGE THEATRE

TROUPE

We can use the language of theatre to empower, but we should never force or stimulate people into doing things that they don't want to do.

Augusto Boal¹²¹

4.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I analyze the appropriation of the alienation effect by *House of Courage* theatre troupe. This theatre troupe was similarly sub contracted by a series of nongovernmental organizations to implement theatre for development projects in the Coastal region. I therefore analyze their adoption and utilization of Brecht's concept of the alienation effect. The focus was on the four key elements of the alienation effect namely performance space, the script/play, acting and narration. This is on the premise that the appropriation of these elements facilitates conscientisation.

4.2. House of Courage Theatre Troupe Profile

House of Courage is a theatre troupe based in Mombasa District in the Coast province of Kenya. From my interaction with the group, the troupe had undergone a huge transformation from a largely unknown group to become one of the renowned theatre groups in the region. The group has mainly gained this strength

¹²¹ See Boal, Augusto. *Politics, Education and Change* in O'Toole John and Donelan Kate [Ed] Drama, Culture and Empowerment: Brisbane, IDEA publications, 1996. 50.

through their attachment to a number of nongovernmental organizations and projects. These organizations have offered them opportunities through which they have built their capacity in theatre. Some of these include Population Services International (PSI), IMPACT and the AMKENI project. Through these organizations and projects, the group gained a lot of experience and exposure to theatre for development. The performances featured in this study were carried out in *Bamburi*, *Mtopanga* and *Matingasi* in Mombasa in June 2005.

4.3. Performance Space

The performances by *House of Courage* theatre troupe were carried out in open air spaces in the community. These performances relied on available community spaces and the group did not utilize a stage. According to the group, the adoption of a stage would have hindered interaction between the actors and the audience. The performance venues were mainly active spots where community members often met such as market centers', village squares, playing grounds and maskanis.¹²² The shape of the performance space was not definitive although in all the three performances the spectators surrounded the actors. From the performances as shown in the photographs below, it was evident that all these venues were open air in design. Through this setting, the performance space

¹²² Maskanis are common in the coastal town of Mombasa. These are spaces within the community where community members mostly the youth and at times the men congregate to pass time and while away as they play games or chat.

ensured dialogue and rationalization prevailed within the performance as Odhiambo postulates

The theatrical space should be understood more as a communicative medium in a theatrical process. It is the very essence of theatrical expression and realization. It is the ultimate interactive paradigm of several theatrical elements: texts, playwrights, performers, lights, sounds, backdrops, objects and audience. That the theatrical space invites the intersection of all these variable and elements attests to its viability and dynamism.¹²³



House of Courage performance in Mtopanga (Photo by Daniel Were)

¹²³ See C.J. Odhiambo, *Dismantling cultural/racial boundaries: The power of the theatrical space*, in O'Toole John and Donelan Kate [Ed] *Drama, Culture and Empowerment*: Brisbane, IDEA publications, 1996. 74.



House of Courage performance in Bamburi (Photo by Daniel Were)



House of Courage performance at Matingasi (Photo by Daniel Were)

These performance spaces were also kept free of props or any other illusionary trappings that would have created the impression of particular scenery. Instead the setting of the performance space by *House of Courage* theatre troupe was mostly left to the imagination of the spectators. This heightened the alienation effect since the message in the play was given prominence against setting and environment. In tandem with Brecht's views, the audience was treated as the centre of the theatre event and hence they were made not to forget that they are watching a theatrical performance and not living the enacted life in reality. And with such freedom prevailing upon both the actors and the spectators, the characters express their awareness of being watched.¹²⁴

The performance spaces used by *House of Courage* theatre troupe promoted the alienation effect since they were open air spaces. In fact, Brecht affirms that it is well known that contact between the audience and stage is normally made on the basis of empathy. *House of Courage* managed to eliminate the 'fourth wall' concept and therefore minimized the element of illusion in their performances. Further still, all the performances by *House of Courage* theatre troupe were held during the day. As Brecht noted, it is necessary to avoid selective lighting since a half lit stage plus a completely darkened auditorium makes the spectator feel less level headed. Such lighting prevents the spectator from observing his neighbor and in turn hiding him from his neighbor's eyes. He therefore emphasized the

¹²⁴ See Brecht, 45.

necessity of making visible the sources of light to prevent any unwanted element of illusion.¹²⁵ Since all the performances by *House of Courage* theatre troupe were held during the day in open air spaces, they dealt away with the element of illusionary lighting.

4.4. The Script/Play

For *House of Courage*, the troupe members combined efforts in devising scripts for the theatre performances. Content for the plays was drawn from the concerns raised by the community members during the previous performances. The scripts were also prepared such that the knots were visible to the audience and the plays posed issues to the community as problems. A case in point is the script presented during the performance in *Bamburi*. This play featured Hamisi, a long distance truck driver. During his duties in the Democratic Republic of Congo, he met a commercial sex worker and had sexual intercourse with her. Three days later on his way back home, he started exhibiting symptoms of a sexually transmitted infection in his genitalia.

With only one day to get back to his wife of three years, he was in a dilemma. This was because his wife would demand he fulfills his conjugal responsibilities yet he was wary of infecting his wife. On the other hand he was skeptical of introducing a condom to protect his wife since it would have raised suspicion of infidelity and

¹²⁵ Ibid.

risked destroying their marriage. The structure for this play was open ended and the script had two knots. The first knot was Hamisi's dilemma on whether to have sexual intercourse with the commercial sex worker or not. The second knot was what to do on his way back home to prevent infecting his wife while maintaining the secret of his infidelity.

During the second performance in *Mtopanga*, the synopsis for the play revolved around Dave and Ann who were engaged and about to get married. However, the pastor who was to preside over the function insisted on knowing the HIV status of the two before tying the knot. On the final preparatory meeting with their families and the pastor a day to the wedding, the two declared that one among them was HIV positive. But then in spite of the HIV discordance, the two were still committed to proceed with the wedding. On that note, the pastor was adamant on tying the knot since he considered them as sinners who had fornicated. The structure for this play was open ended with two knots. The first knot was at the point when the pastor insisted that they must be tested before getting married. The second knot was at the final meeting where the pastor refused to preside over the wedding.

The third performance in *Matingasi* featured Nuru, a form two student in a local secondary school who was very bright and the leading student in her class. She and her brother had been sent back home from school for failure to pay school

fees. Her father later met an old man who was willing to marry Nuru and help the family offset their financial burden. Attracted with this fortune, Nuru's father had consented and even received some dowry installment which he used to pay school fees for Nuru's brother. When the groom came to pick his bride, Nuru and her mother refused to consent yet her father had already squandered all the money he had received. This play was open ended in nature and had two knots also presented as dilemmas. The first knot was where Nuru and the brother arrived back home from school and their parents were unable to raise money for their school fees. The second knot was when the old man who had given money to Nuru's father came to pick up his bride and Nuru and the mother could not cooperate with the father. Through these loosely tied knots, these plays conformed with the alienation effect.

As Fredrick Jameson observes, the aim of the theatre is not to put a finished artistic product before an audience, but to make the spectator cooperate in the creation of the work. As such it is not the work of the playwright to provide the spectator with the future historical solution of the historical conflicts that he depicts.¹²⁶ In this regard, the problem posing plays used by *House of Courage* theatre troupe gave room for the audience to help in deciding solutions to the problems. This was through the Boalian concept of simultaneous dramaturgy and

¹²⁶ See F. Jameson, *Introduction to Marxist Aesthetics*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1977.

forum theatre. This way the spectators were part of decoding the issues at stake hence exemplifying Freire's notion

The presentation of an individual with a coded situation leads them to split it up and in the process of decoding describes the situation facilitating the discovery of interaction among parts of the disjointed whole. Coding is the representation of that situation showing some of its constituent elements in interaction whereas decoding is the critical analysis of the coded situation.¹²⁷

By their problem posing nature, the performances by *House of Courage* conformed to the alienation effect. This was further enhanced through the central divergent questions around which the discussions were centered.¹²⁸ During all the three performances, these questions were always posed to the audience when introducing the performance to the audience. Brecht notes that by working through questions, the spectators are made to think deeper and critically into the issues at stake. From the performances by *House of Courage* theatre troupe, it is through the central divergent questions that alienation of the spectators commenced. These questions enabled the spectators to view the performance in the light of the key question that required a critical review of the performance at hand. For instance during the performance featured above in *Matingasi*, the central divergent question was “should Nuru stop going to school and get married at a very tender age in order to get her family out of poverty? Is marriage the solution to poverty?” The progression of the performance created the need that the audience tallies the

¹²⁷ See Freire, 64.

¹²⁸ The central divergent question is the key thesis/objective of a performance.

central divergent question with the unfolding of events in the plays. This helped the audience to critique the events as they unfolded.

4.5. Acting

According to Brecht, the greatest role that the actors play in the theatre is to enact the environment that the people live in which must be brought to bear in a big and significant way. He therefore advocated moving away from the theatre that portrays the environment in the existing drama within the limits of the hero's point of view. The bulk of the work then rests on the actors, who Brecht notes should refrain from going over wholly into their role, remaining detached from the character they are playing and clearly inviting criticism of him. Similar to Brecht's view, Okhlopov also observes

We do not go to a theatre to forget we are in a theatre. We go to it because it takes us away from life but we are not fooled into thinking it is real. The actors should not allow themselves to become completely transformed on the stage into the character they are playing.¹²⁹

Looking at the *House of Courage* theatre troupe performances, the actors rehearsed beforehand but then relied a lot on improvisation in the course of the performances. Their performances sought to counteract Stanislavsky's acting technique which focuses mainly on the spectacle as a means of enjoyment for the audience.¹³⁰ One key element the actors relied upon which enhanced the alienation effect was the introduction of the performances. During the performance in

¹²⁹ Ibid., 124.

¹³⁰ See C. Stanislavski, *An Actor Prepares*, New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1973.

Bamburi, the facilitator began by introducing the troupe, the theme and then the actors as noted below

Greetings. This is House of Courage theatre troupe and we are here to entertain and also dialogue with you about several social issues. Today we will be discussing infidelity and sexually transmitted infections. We will present a play up to a particular point where we will stop it and invite you to a discussion about the issues presented in the play. I therefore urge you to pay a lot of attention during the performance. However, let me first invite the actors to introduce themselves.

Having set the pace, the actors then moved to the stage and introduced themselves.

Actor 1: Good morning residents of Bamburi. My name is Abdalla Muringa and I will be acting as Hamisi in the play. Hamisi is a long distance truck driver who is adulterous and ends up contracting a sexually transmitted infection.

Actor 2: My name is Sofia Musa and I will be acting as Hamisi's wife in the play.

In this performance, the facilitator and the actors through rolling, prepared the audience over what to expect and helped in eliminating illusion in the performances.¹³¹ The same was replicated in the other two performances by *House of Courage* theatre troupe in *Mtopanga* and *Matingasi*. The conclusion of the performances was also marked by de-rolling. For instance during the performance in *Mtopanga*, the de-rolling of one of the key actors in the performance was as follows

My name is Ahmed Salim and I was acting as Dave, the boy about to get married to Ann, and I was HIV positive in the play. I want you to know that

¹³¹ Rolling of characters is the act of the actors introducing themselves to the audience then presenting their character bio data to the audience and their character names or letting the audience name them according to the character they represent.

the lady who was acting as Ann is not my girlfriend and I am not HIV positive. That was only in the performance and not in my real life.

In expressing the character bio lines through techniques such as rolling and de rolling of the actors, the audience was made aware that they are leaving the reality plane and entering the fictional. At the end of the performance they were reminded that they are leaving the fictional plane and re-entering reality again in line with Brecht's assertion

The actor is not asked to give a perfect imitation of those who were involved nor is he required to cast a spell to his listeners. He is merely reporting the incident and no illusion of reality is necessary. It does not disguise the fact that it is only a piece of theatre.¹³²

The actors therefore made it possible for the audience to relate to the performance as a rehearsed play and not as reality itself.

The *House of Courage* theatre practitioners acted with a detachment from their roles, which was cultivated by the structural design of the plays. The plays they used as I have noted previously in this chapter were open ended and problem - posing in nature. These plays portrayed conflicts between the actors which were transferred to the audience through the central divergent questions. This facilitated social divisions among the audience members and thereby catalyzing the alienation effect. As Freire observes, the dramatization acts as a codification in

¹³² See Brecht, 126.

which community issues are posed as problems to be discussed and solved.¹³³ The *House of Courage* performances were therefore based on Brecht's notion that the actor must be detached and instead represent certain class attitudes in their acting. These social divisions were clearly evident at the commencement of the facilitation phase during the performance in *Mtopanga*

Facilitator: Should Dave and Ann get married realizing that one of them is HIV positive?

Audience: (Yes and no responses)

Facilitator: How many of you are saying yes? By show of hands (some members of the audience raise their hands). And how many are saying no? By show of hands (Some other members of the audience raise their hands).

What the audience was portraying in this performance was their social standing and approach to this issue. The facilitator in this case only highlighted the divisions already created by the actors and therefore they managed to attain the alienation effect.

4.6. Narration

To attain the alienation effect, Brecht emphasized on the need for the actors and a narrator to speak directly with the audience. The idea was to remove the impression of a performance and promote the idea of an ordinary conversation. The essence of a narrator would be to aid in tying together the knots in the plays. For *House of Courage* theatre troupe, although the actors spoke directly with the audience in some instances, this function was mostly executed by a facilitator.

¹³³ See Freire, 116.

Looking at the performance in *Bamburi*, the actors first presented the play which peaked at the key dramatic moment. It is at these key dramatic moments that the actors were faced with a dilemma that had been built by the ensuing conflict in the play. The facilitators therefore stopped the plays at the key dramatic moments and commenced a discussion with members of the audience through questions. For instance during the performance in *Bamburi*

Facilitator: What should Hamisi do?

Audience: (Varied responses)

Facilitator: I want one volunteer to tell us what Hamisi should do? (A man moves forward)

Facilitator: What is your name?

Audience member: Juma

Facilitator: What should Hamisi do?

Juma: Let him go home and lie to the wife that he is unwell and hence he is not in a position to engage in sexual intercourse

Facilitator: What will he tell his wife he is ailing from?

Juma: Let him lie that it is just some malaria

Facilitator: And if the wife insists on going with him to hospital?

During the other performances in *Mtopanga* and *Matingasi*, the facilitator employed the technique of discussion with members of the audience. Ideally this was the dominant technique used in all the three performances in *Bamburi*, *Mtopanga* and *Matingasi* by *House of Courage* theatre troupe. The only challenge is that in many of the performances, the facilitators did not conduct adequate and in depth discussions to facilitate critical reflection. Instead many issues were left unfinished since the facilitation was pegged on simply gathering opinions from the spectators. For instance during the performance in *Mtopanga*, at some point the facilitation went like this

Facilitator: What should Dave and Ann do?

Audience Member: I think they should part ways because one is HIV positive

Facilitator: Anyone else?

Audience Member 2: I also support him. They should part ways

Facilitator: What about you my sister?

Audience member 3: They should just stay together

Facilitator: And you there?

Audience member 4: They should separate

The facilitation in this performance did not really promote dialogue but rather sought the participation of many community members which was unfortunately at the surface level. The facilitation lacked a recipe for serious reflection since the lack of deeper probing presented a situation whereby theatre was used more as an information gathering tool. What was lacking in this performance was the realization that to promote critical reflection, there is need for in-depth dialogue hence it is essential to challenge the opinions of the audience. *House of Courage* theatre troupe failed to utilize interactive strategies such as stepping into the shoes of a character and hot seating a character with intense frequency during the performance in *Mtopanga*. As it emerged, there was minimal audience involvement in this performance at the facilitation/narration stage. Yet it is through using a variety of such interactive theatrical strategies that would have fully enabled the realization of the alienation effect.

These interactive facilitation techniques were however utilized during the performance in *Matingasi*, where the facilitator used the technique of stepping into the shoes of a character. In this performance, the facilitator called on members of

the audience to suggest what the character Nuru should do. One member of the audience who volunteered to give his views was then called on the stage. He was asked by the facilitator to replace the character Nuru in the play and act out what she was to do. This member of the audience replaced the actor who was playing the role of Nuru and replayed the character Nuru. His suggestion in character was that Nuru runs away from home. His suggestion was however not very popular with many of the audience members. Another audience member opted to step into the shoes of Nuru and while performing in role, remained adamant and sought the assistance of the chief to prevent early marriage as castigated by the father. This suggestion seemed popular with majority of the audience members and was supported by many.

This technique was similarly employed during the performance in *Bamburi* where audience members replaced the actor playing Hamisi in the play and acted out suggestions to his dilemma. Essentially this technique involved audience members taking roles in the performance and acting out their opinions. This performance conformed to Boal's notion in that popular audiences prefer performances that enable them to rehearse their suggestions.¹³⁴ They therefore abhor performances that are closed ended with little room for improvisation, a view supported by Ogolla who observes

Communities pleasure in talking directly with the protagonists, in clarifying conflicts and also creation of further conflicts and heightening

¹³⁴ See Boal, 92.

the dramatic tension that ultimately leads to greater educational exploration for the community laying open their fears and prejudices. The community then enjoys this power to try out their ideas hence the artist empowers them to start rehearsing the solutions to their dilemmas within the fictive to be able to live it within the painfully real.¹³⁵

In the performance in *Bamburi*, the facilitator also employed the technique of hot seating, which gave the audience an opportunity to question a performer in the play and hence understand their actions and motivation. In this performance, the facilitator called on members of the audience to ask Hamisi questions. One member of the audience questioned Hamisi's decision to have sexual intercourse with a commercial sex worker yet he had a very beautiful wife at home. Responding in character, Hamisi noted that it was the sexual urges that drove him to the commercial sex worker. Another audience member asked him whether he liked having sexual intercourse with commercial sex workers to which he noted this was his first time. A third audience member asked if he used a condom and whether he knew how to use one to which he noted he had never and did not know how to use one.

Through these techniques the facilitation enhanced a deeper understanding of the characters actions. This technique was however utilized only in *Bamburi*. The facilitator also utilized the technique of giving advice in the two performances in *Bamburi* and *Matingasi*. During the performance in *Bamburi*, the facilitator called on a member of the audience and asked him to advice the character Hamisi

¹³⁵ See Ogolla, 19.

Facilitator: If Hamisi was your brother, what advice would you give him?
Audience Member: (To Hamisi) My brother, I know that you have already messed. It is good if you told your wife that you are not feeling well then go to hospital first and seek treatment. After that remain faithful only to your wife but if ever you are to have sex again with anyone who is not your wife then use a condom.

Essentially these techniques were putting the audience through a process of critical reflection. As Kamlongera observes, there is need to dispense with the cold after performance discussions common to the traditional uses of theatre.¹³⁶

4.7. Conclusion

In this chapter, I analyzed the appropriation of Brecht's alienation effect by *House of Courage* theatre troupe. I assessed three performances held in *Bamburi*, *Mtopanga* and *Matingasi* in Mombasa. From these performances, I analyzed the appropriation of the alienation effect with regard to the performance space, the plays, acting and narration. From the findings, all the three performances were held in the open air and therefore limited illusion while enhancing the alienation effect. Similarly the scripts were open ended and problem posing in nature with loosely tied knots that further facilitated interaction between the actors and the audience. Narration too was obviously present in all the three performances. Nonetheless narration was a bit limited in quality and outcome and this is an area that may need to be improved upon if the facilitation is to foster conscientisation through critical reflection.

¹³⁶ See Kamlongera, 145.

CHAPTER FIVE

TOWARDS A SIMULTANEOUS DRAMATURGY; SANAA THEATRE

GROUP

What needs to be alienated, and how this is to be done, depends on the exposition demanded by the entire episode; and this is where the theatre has to speak up decisively for the interests of its own time

Bertolt Brecht.¹³⁷

5.1. Introduction

This chapter analyses the appropriation of the alienation effect by *Sanaa Theatre Troupe*. This group was affiliated to a nongovernmental organization in implementing the theatre for development program. Their theatre practice therefore has similarities of purpose with *Amateur* and *House of Courage* theatre troupes. This chapter analyses the level and nature of appropriation of the alienation effect with regard to performance space, the play, acting and facilitation/ narration. I peg this analysis on the premise that the alienation effect is the critical tool that enables theatre for development to transform communities, thus enabling development.

5.2. Sanaa Theatre Group Profile

Sanaa Theatre Group is based in Nairobi and allied to the organization Sanaa Art Promotions. Their theatre programs covered mainly Nairobi and parts of Eastern Province. The theatre for development practice of *Sanaa Theatre Group* presented

¹³⁷ See Brecht, 201.

a different angle from which to evaluate their theatre practice against the other two. Unlike *Amateur* and *House of Courage* who had undergone training on theatre for development, many of the *Sanaa* practitioners had received practical mentorship on theatre for development without any formal training. The performances featured in this study were carried out at *Miwani* in Machakos in July 2005, *Kangaru Girls' School* in Embu in July 2005 and *Ena* market in Embu in August 2005.

5.3. Performance Space

As noted earlier on, the essence of the performance space in theatre for development cannot be gainsaid. Wilson accentuates this fact in his acknowledgment that "...the physical environment of a theatre production is an important part of the experience. Whether the theatre space is in door or outdoors, large or small, the shape of its stage and the relationship of stage to audience will help determine the nature of the experience..."¹³⁸ This is further acknowledged by Boal who notes

Theater is powerful because we create an aesthetic space where everything is both magnified and dichotomous. We are more than ourselves – both the actor, the subject narrating the story and the character, the object to whom the things have happened. Theater is telescopic because it brings close what is far away and makes bigger what is small. These characteristics of the aesthetic space make it extremely powerful.¹³⁹

¹³⁸ See E. Wilson, *The theatre experience*, 7th Edition, The Mc Graw – Hill Companies Inc. New York, 1998

¹³⁹ See Boal, *Politics, Education and Change* in O'Toole John and Donelan Kate [Ed] Drama, Culture and Empowerment: Brisbane, IDEA publications, 1996. 49.

For *Sanaa Theatre Group*, choice of performance venue was mostly based on the availability of space and its convenience to the target audience. On this basis, the performance by *Sanaa Theatre Group* at *Miwani* in Machakos was held at a community center. The venue for this performance was the local shopping center which was open air in design. The performance was held adjacent to a wall hence the audience stood on one side in a semicircular formation, surrounding the actors who stood next to the wall and facing the audience. Similarly the performance at *Ena*, in Embu, was held at a community center in *Ena* shopping centre. The space for the performance was also open air and the arrangement was such that it facilitated interaction. The performance space in these two cases lacked any entrappings that would portray illusion and hence provided an interactive forum for the actors and the audience.



The performance by Sanaa at Miwani in Machakos (Photo by Daniel Were)



The performance at Ena by Sanaa Theatre Group (Photo by Daniel Were)

In these two performances, the audience members subconsciously formed a circle around the performance space with the performers in the middle. The advantage of this circular arrangement as Wilson observes is that “....it offers more intimacy than the ordinary proscenium with the performers in the center; even in a larger theater the audience can be closer to them.....there is an unconscious communion basic to human behavior, which comes when people form a circle, from the embrace of two people....¹⁴⁰ There were no barriers between the actors and the audience hence promoting the alienation effect. The performances were similarly held during the day and this did not present the need for lighting, which would have promoted illusion.

¹⁴⁰ See Wilson, 149.

On the other hand the performance at *Kangaru Girls' School* was held in the school hall. Through being held in a school hall, the performance introduced the 'fourth wall' concept which promoted illusion. As Wilson observes, "The environment of the theatre building conditions the spectator's mood in approaching a performance. It creates certain expectations and also conditions their experience".¹⁴¹ The school hall presented an enclosed space that did not open up the audience to the realities of the world but instead locked them up to the limits of the performance. This concept limited the performance from fully attaining the alienation effect and hence achieving its intended effect.



Sanaa Theatre Group performance at Kangaru Girls (Photo by Daniel Were)

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

In view of this performance at *Kangaru Girls School*, I argue with Brecht that the theatre needs to be endeared with the instructive elements. Part of the aspects that the theatre enjoys in its instructive potential is the communal aspect. Theatre being a communal activity needs to be transformed from the buildings to the open air spaces in the community.¹⁴² As I have noted above, the performances by *Sanaa Theatre Group* in *Miwani* and *Ena* were held in open spaces in the community. These performances conformed to Brecht's idea that the potential that theatre holds can best be realized in these communal spaces.

5.4. The Script/Play

Not all the scripts used in the performances by *Sanaa Theatre Group* were open ended in nature. The performance in *Miwani* featured Kevin, a young unemployed youth, who was unable to meet his girlfriends' requirements of expensive outings. His relationship was in jeopardy as he was on the verge of losing his girlfriend to a wealthy competitor. Faced with this problem, one of his friends convinced him to smoke bhang to deal with his stress and forget his problems and he immediately consented. This play in its structural design lacked clearly defined knots since it was one complete whole.

The performance in *Ena* was on alcoholism and featured a farmer who had received his dividend payment from the sale of his tea crop. With this payment, he

¹⁴² See Brecht, 156.

headed straight to the drinking den where he began to indulge. In his drunken stupor, he seduced and ended up engaging in sexual intercourse with a commercial sex worker. He woke up the following morning to find all his money missing and with the girl nowhere in sight. In this state, he was stranded on what explanation he was to give to his wife whom he had promised the money. In this play, the first knot was when the man had received his money and was debating between going home and going to the bar. The second knot was when he was faced with the decision of taking the commercial sex worker to bed or not. The final knot was when he woke up to find his money missing and the girl out of sight.

The other performance at *Kangaru Girls' School* was on incest. The play featured Angel who faced constant sexual abuse by her step father whom she lived with together with her mother. In spite of her constant complaints, her mother never believed her and instead castigated her for peddling falsehoods. In the end she got pregnant and her step father wanted her to undergo an abortion. Angel in her moral uprightness was adamant of undergoing the abortion which infuriated her stepfather. His stepfather then threatened to throw her out of the house. In this final performance, the first knot was when Angel sought her mother's intervention to stop sexual abuse by her stepfather. The second knot was when she got pregnant and was threatened of eviction by the step father unless she aborted the foetus.

These last two performances in *Ena* and *Kangaru Girls School* used open ended plays. The plays used had the individual episodes knotted together in such a way that the knots were easily visible. These open ended plays conformed to Brecht's notion that the action should be broken into open ended episodes.¹⁴³ The scripts were also problem posing in nature according to Freire's ideals. The points with the knots had clear dilemmas that would facilitate discussion and interaction with the audience. The dilemmas in the plays gave the audience chance for judgment since it is at these points that they could contribute to the performance. The open ended nature of these scripts is what facilitated the alienation effect while inspiring dialogue among the actors with the audience. This then worked towards attaining Freire's dialogue as the starting point towards conscientisation.

5.5. Acting

The performances by *Sanaa Theatre Group* were often rehearsed beforehand although improvisation was key in most of these performances. During the performance at *Miwani* in Machakos, rolling of the actors was not conducted. Nonetheless the troupe conducted de-rolling at the end of the performance. Unfortunately the de-rolling may not have had a strong influence on the acting since the spectators would have been mired in illusion throughout the performance. The performances in *Ena* and *Kangaru Girls School* were also the same whereby the troupe conducted derolling but did not roll the actors.

¹⁴³ See Brecht, 28.

In all these performances, dialogue was enhanced by the facilitator who increased the understanding of the character roles. Whenever the plays reached the dilemma point, the facilitator intervened and helped the audience in understanding the characters. For instance during the performance at *Ena* in Embu, the facilitator explored the character bio-lines as follows

Facilitator: Did we like the play?

Audience: Yes

Facilitator: Which character did you like most and why?

Audience: (Varied responses)

Facilitator: (To one audience member) Who was your favorite character?

Audience member: I liked the old man because he portrayed what many men do around this place.

Facilitator: (To the whole audience) Which character did you dislike most and why?

Audience members: (They all shout Kanini – the prostitute in the play)

Facilitator: (To one audience member) Why do you dislike her and she only got what she was offered?

Audience member: Yes she got what she was offered but it was unfair to steal from the old man everything he had. A lady like that one is a thief and if she is found she should be burnt to death.

The same was exhibited during the performance at *Kangaru School* and also at *Miwani* in Machakos. Through this element, the acting exhibited during the performances by *Sanaa Theatre Group* tried to reduce elements of illusion, and thereby attaining the alienation effect in the performances. What was important here is that the performers' tried to avoid getting into a trance and living in that trance. Instead the actors enhanced interaction with the audience. During all the three performances by *Sanaa Theatre Group*, there was a lot of interaction between the actors and performers in the performances through role playing. At the dilemma points, the facilitation technique used extensively was stepping into

the shoes of a character and discussion in all the performances. During these points, the facilitator engaged members of the audience to step into the shoes of several characters in the play.

For instance during the performance in *Ena*, the facilitator sought for opinions from the audience on what the man should do having lost all his money and he needed to go back home with unfulfilled promises. Then rather than letting members of the audience just express their view, he invited them to act them out. One audience member who was called in to step into the shoes of a character suggested that the man should go back to the wife and pretend that he was hijacked by thugs who stole all the money from him. Another audience member suggested that he tells his wife the truth and he will be forgiven when the storm cools down. This technique of stepping into the shoes of a character was extensively used in the performances by *Sanaa Theatre Group* in *Miwani*, *Kangaru School* and *Ena*.

This technique was employed until when an amicable solution was arrived at that many of the spectators agreed to. Through stepping into the shoes of a character, the performers were able to maintain interaction between them with the audience. Through this technique, different members of the audience were given the chance to try out their suggestions and each suggestion was explored in depth. From one dilemma and the solutions offered by members of the audience it led to further dilemmas and hence all the possibilities were explored in the course of the

performance. This way there was utmost interaction between the members of the audience and the actors on stage and hence enhancing the alienation effect.

5.6. Narration/Facilitation

Just like *Amateur Theatre Productions* and *House of Courage* theatre troupes, *Sanaa Theatre Group* also had the narratorial aspect in their performances. This aspect of establishing and maintaining interaction with the audience was carried out by a facilitator. The facilitator played a critical role in ensuring a steady flow of events during the whole performance. The only difference with the former two practices is that for *Sanaa Theatre Group*, the interaction through role plays was more enhanced throughout the whole process. All the performances by *Sanaa* theatre group in *Miwani*, *Ena* and *Kangaru School* commenced with an introduction of the troupe, their mission and purpose of the performance. All this was carried out by the facilitator. Taking the performance in *Kangaru School*, the facilitator in his introduction noted the following

Good morning. Welcome to this session today. We are proud to have you with us. This is Sanaa Theatre Group from Sanaa Art Promotions. This is a project called 'Badilika Uishi' funded by the Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. Today we are here for the main outreach which is a culmination of mini outreaches that we carried out in your individual schools. All the issues we discussed in our individual schools will thus be discussed here in this much bigger forum. To start us off I would invite the performers here to begin the performance.

The critical role here was to enable the audience understand their purpose in that performance and what to expect. When the performance reached the dilemma

point, the facilitator explored the character bio-lines as described previously in this chapter. After introduction, the role of the facilitator graduated to the next level of decoding the elements in the performances. Here the two techniques majorly used in all the performances by *Sanaa Theatre Group* were the discussion technique and stepping into the shoes of a character.

Discussion as a facilitation technique was very evident in all the three performances. At the dilemma points, the facilitator always sought the opinions of the audience on the issue at hand. Likewise the facilitator sought their concurrence on decisions taken by certain characters or audience members in resolving the dilemma. This technique was often interwoven with the technique of stepping into the shoes of a character in all the three performances in *Miwani*, *Kangaru School* and *Ena* by *Sanaa Theatre Group*. To explore this technique further, we take the performance in *Kangaru School* where after exploring the character bio-lines

Facilitator: What should Angel do?

Audience member: She should just run way from that home and away from that beastly step father?

Facilitator: Do we agree with him?

Audience: (Many responses) No

Facilitator: Then what should Angel do?

Audience member: (A different one) I think this girl should go with the mother for the pregnancy test and if she refuses to believe her then she should tape record their conversation with the step father and let the mother listen to it later.

Facilitator: (To the audience) Do you agree with him?

Audience: (Many responses) Yes

Facilitator: To that audience member who just spoke) I want you to take the place of Angel and do what you have just told us. (The audience member takes the place of Angel in the play for the role play)

Mother: What is wrong my daughter?

*Audience Member: You remember I told you my step father is abusing me.
 Mother: Stop that. I told you that is not true. What has gotten into your head, are you trying to spoil his name simply because he is not your biological father.
 Audience member: If you don't believe me then listen to this (he mimes putting a radio on).*

Through using role plays and the proceeding discussion, the facilitator managed to enhance audience involvement in the performances. These two techniques as we have mentioned previously featured in the course of the whole performance. They ensured constant interaction between the actors and the audience members was maintained. Role plays were specifically used more as a way of enhancing the participation of the audience in the performance. As such there was more involvement of the actors and audience interaction in the course of the performance. Through this, the audience was also put on the spot into thinking about the best ways to solve the issue at hand.

The facilitation exhibited by *Sanaa Theatre Group* ensured the audience was engaged in critical thinking. This way they were not just picking out solutions without placing them into critical thinking. This role was visible in the performances all through to the end where the facilitator summarized the deliberations and conducted de-rolling of characters. The process was similar in all the three performances. A case in point is the performance in *Ena* where the facilitator concluded the outreach as follows

Our performance today was on alcoholism. We saw how the old man in the play took all his dividends from tea farming to the bar. We also saw how

careless he was and ended up losing all his earnings to a prostitute. We discussed and we have agreed that it is advisable to first take your earnings home before going to the bar. We have also agreed that if you must go straight to the bar then you should let your wife accompany you to collect the money after which she can take the money home while you head to the bar. We also agreed that it is not advisable to drink a lot since you end up messing up like the old man who picked a prostitute and had unprotected sexual intercourse with her. Thank you all for your contributions to this discussion but before we go I would like to have all the characters in the play here so that you can know them.

Actor 1: My name is peter Njeru and I was acting as the farmer in the play

Actor 2: My name is Ann Mureithi and I was acting as Kanini the prostitute in the play

Actor 3: My name is Esther Mugo and I was acting as the farmer's wife in the play.

Much as Sanaa Theatre Group employed discussion and stepping into the shoes of a character to decode the thematic aspects of the plays, the performance in *Miwani* did not enable deeper discussion of issues. As mentioned previously, the play had challenges in that the conflict was not well developed. The coding of the performance was problematic and this was evident at the decoding stage. Since the conflict in the play was poorly developed, facilitation was short lived since it was difficult for the facilitator to polarize the audience into taking certain social standings. Such standing would have been catalyzed by a well developed conflict in the play. The absence of conflict did not enable the community to take sides and debate thereby critically reflecting on the issues at stake. Instead the spectators all took sides with the protagonist since they were not given adequate reason for debate in the play. Nonetheless the facilitation techniques used by *Sanaa Theatre Group* in *Kangaru School* and *Ena* enhanced the alienation effect. These

performances exhibited dialogue between the actors and the audience that would promote critical thinking among the spectators.

5.7. Conclusion

In this chapter I analyzed the appropriation of the alienation effect by *Sanaa Theatre Group*. From the analysis, it emerged that the performances in *Ena* and *Miwani* were held in the open hence dealt away with the element of illusion. The performance in *Kangaru School* however, was held in the school hall and this introduced the 'fourth wall' concept. The plays used in *Kangaru school* and *Ena* were open ended in nature but the play used in *Miwani* was closed ended hence hindered critical decoding of issues. Acting was well conducted in all the three performances apart from the fact that the closed ended play in *Miwani* hindered proper detachment in the acting. Narration/facilitation too was well executed in *Ena* and *Kangaru School* although the closed ended play limited decoding of issues in *Miwani*. Nonetheless role plays and discussion techniques that were extensively used in *Ena* and *Kangaru School* facilitated interaction between the actors and the audience thereby realizing the alienation effect.

CHAPTER SIX

THE APPROPRIATION OF THE ALIENATION EFFECT: ISSUES AND DILEMMAS

We must judge less often by intention than by results, aware that theory and practice are more often in conflict than in accord.

Erwin Piscator¹⁴⁴

6.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I analyze some of the major challenges that confront theatre for development practitioners in Kenya today. Through chapters three, four and five, I analyzed the appropriation of the alienation effect by *Amateur*, *House of Courage* and *Sanaa theatre groups*. Through the analysis, it emerged that the selected theatre for development practitioners' appropriate elements of the alienation effect in their theatre practices. Nonetheless in a number of the theatre practices, there were deficiencies in the appropriation of the alienation effect. This chapter therefore discusses the key barriers and challenges in appropriating the alienation effect. I argue that it is these challenges that hinder the appropriation of the alienation effect and ultimately constraint the ability of theatre for development to attain conscientisation.

¹⁴⁴ See Brecht, 132

6.2. Scripting and Performance

While most of the performances had well developed plays, two of the performances depicted a paucity of scripting skills since the plays lacked well developed conflicts. This was evident during the performances by *Amateur Theatre Productions* in *Burumba* and *Sanaa Theatre Group* in *Miwani*. With such scripting deficiencies, conscientisation remained elusive in these performances. The challenge is that the scripts devised for these two performances had an Aristotelian orientation that conforms to the Freytag pyramid depicted below

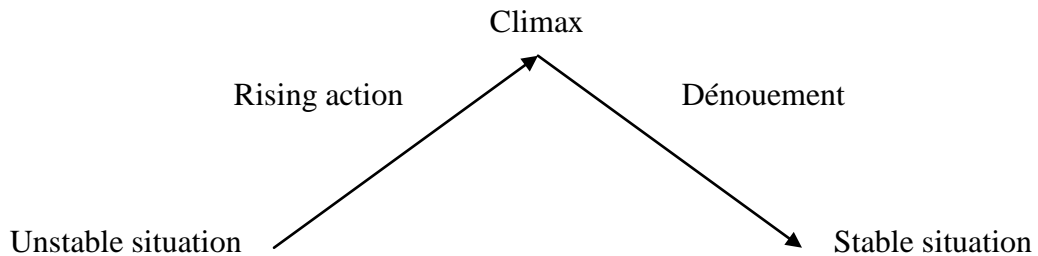


Figure 1.2. The Freytag pyramid

The plays used during these two performances were not open ended and the issues presented in the play were not posed to the audience as problems. Instead they were brought to a conclusive end within the time span of the play which as Ogolla posits

The result of using the well made play is that the people at the grassroots perceive the performance as a curtain raiser to the main development issues of the day in the form of a lecture or manipulated discussion.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁵ See Ogolla, 23.

The scripting deficiencies were further compounded by the fact that the plays used in *Burumba* and *Miwani* did not clearly depict the key dramatic moments. This was evident for instance in *Miwani* where the actors performed the play up to the dilemma point. The facilitator then stopped the play and tried to seek participation from the audience but was met with cold faces. Ideally a dilemma should emerge clearly from the conflict in the play. But apparently the play had not polarized the audience and the facilitator had to explain the dilemma for the community to comprehend. This meant that the performance was not problem posing and unable to effectively polarize the audience to facilitate dialogue on the issues presented. This is what would invite criticism of the issues in the play and thus enable the audience to engage in critical reflection. In *Burumba* and *Miwani*, the play went further and even suggested solutions unknowingly yet it was ideally supposed to be a problem posing play. The failure of these scripts to outline the key dramatic moment and hence the dilemmas was an outcome of poorly developed conflicts in the scripts. Since the dilemma was greatly tied to the conflict, a poor conflict almost necessarily implied a poor dilemma.

According to Brecht, this kind of presentation depicts the structure of society on the stage as incapable of being influenced. But then for theatre to serve as a change agent, it should not portray events as fixed and unchangeable. Furthermore man should not be viewed as helpless before these events and the play should instead avoid indulging one into a trance. It should present the incidents in a manner that it

can be intercepted at any point without causing any disruptions. It is from these interceptions that the audience can be able to clarify various issues and allow the exposition to go on.¹⁴⁶ Considering that the realization of the alienation effect demands a problem posing play, *Amateur* and *Sanaa Theatre Troupes* depicted the need to build their capacity on scripting skills and performance techniques. This will enable the troupes to devise open ended and problem posing plays that pose dilemmas which will invoke community dialogue. The kind of plays that should be used need to adopt the model depicted below

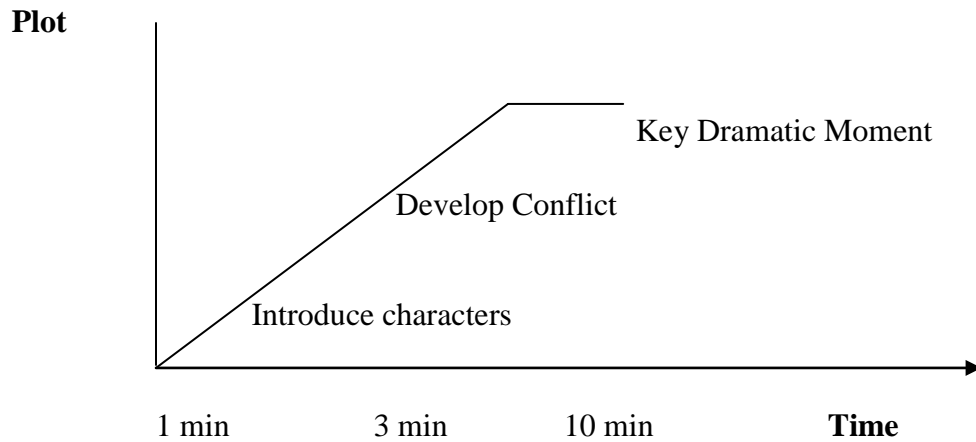


Figure 1.3. Timeline for a theatre for development script

The first three minutes of the script should be solely spent in introducing the main character and foundation of the conflict. The final three minutes should be spent in enhancing the conflict by building up intense emotions towards the key dramatic moment and dilemma. I presume that a good and well developed conflict should be cultivated in less than ten minutes. This is in order to avoid the script becoming

¹⁴⁶ See Brecht, 93.

boring or the temptation to tie the story in repetition, or otherwise load too many issues in the script that may end up confusing the spectators.

Another challenge that emerged was that most of the theatre troupes lacked adequate mentorship. As the *Sanaa Theatre Group* practitioners noted, they actually received limited technical guidance on the right skills to apply. Their application of the techniques was therefore based on limited knowledge on some techniques and the rest was based on individual experiences. The structural design of this program was such that the theatre practitioners relied on theatre supervisors for guidance. Nonetheless some of these supervisors were in some instances deficient in theatre for development knowledge. This apparently meant they could not adequately guide the theatre troupes on the most appropriate techniques to use. The danger in this as Ogolla points out is that

TFD has in recent years been patronized by the strangest of fellows whose background in basic theatre is questionable. Community theatre is an area that needs keen specialization and not just every actor or director can deal.¹⁴⁷

From the performances I attended, it emerged that experience mattered a lot in utilizing the alienation effect in the performances. Experienced performers found it easier to execute a lot of the techniques while many of the less experienced performers were still shy and a little bit fearful in the performances. Looking at the array of actors who featured in the performances, it was evident that many

¹⁴⁷ See Ogolla, 27.

performers who had prior community theatre experiences had an upper hand in performance. This was visible especially during the performances by *Amateur* and *House of Courage* theatre troupes. Coincidentally the two performances in *Marachi* and *Karibuni* by *Amateur* were performed by a different crop of actors than the *Burumba* performances, save for a few. The *House of Courage* performers were virtually the same for all the performances.

For *Sanaa*, it was evident that majority of the team members had limited theatrical experience as the actors attested save for a few. The actors who had prior experiences in theatre for development had a smooth sailing during the performances. On the other hand, for the performers especially from *Amateur* and *Sanaa* who had an amateur theatre background, let alone theatre for development, their theatrical praxis was wanting in several aspects. It also emerged that experimenting or adopting new techniques was quite a challenge for the inexperienced artists. The depiction of alienation strategies as Brecht affirms needs an actor who is well grounded and very flexible to be able to bring out a number of these techniques.¹⁴⁸

Aesthetics similarly emerged to be a challenge in some of the performances especially in situations where the acting standards were generally low as an outcome of experience or its attendant influences. By coincidence, the

¹⁴⁸ See Brecht, 137.

performances that did not clearly depict the alienation effect were also of generally low aesthetic standards. The enactment during the performances by *Sanaa* in *Miwani* and *Amateur theatre productions in Burumba* were generally not well brought out. This generally implied low aesthetic standards which as Kerr accentuates in reference to the Laedza Batanani experience in Botswana

In Botswana there was a tendency to avoid a display of intimidatingly sophisticated theatre skills. The idea was that a fairly simple set of skills, which were nevertheless close to indigenous performing traditions, could be an appropriate communication and conscientisation tool for villagers to adopt. Doubts existed however whether such a rough theatre might not in fact be a euphemism for a second rate theatre, especially bearing in mind that the pre colonial traditions of popular theatre were certainly not 'rough' in the sense of de-emphasizing skills.¹⁴⁹

At the conclusion of the attractive mobilization and icebreaking activities in *Burumba* and *Miwani*, some of the audience members simply matched off to go and do other activities. The audience did not feel motivated enough to remain for the whole duration of the performances. The element of low aesthetics pulled the audience towards critiquing the techniques in the play or rather the standard of performance rather than focusing on the issues presented by the plays. As Odhiambo postulates "...aesthetics is central to theatre for development because it is the means by which the message is communicated..."¹⁵⁰ From watching all the performances by the three troupes, plays that excellently executed the theatrical, including alienation techniques, were of much higher aesthetic appeal to the

¹⁴⁹ See Kerr, 155.

¹⁵⁰ See C.J. Odhiambo, *The Aesthetics of Theatre for Community Development in Kenya*, The Nairobi Journal of Literature, Department of literature; University of Nairobi, March 2003 (54-60).

audience. The high aesthetics not only captivated the audience to stay put and watch but was also interesting to them and invited them to watch the plays very keenly and critically. As Brecht observes

A bad stage performance is not just one that does not make a good impression, but similarly also creates harm. Good art stimulates sensitivity to art whereas bad art damages it. Theatre greatly influences the taste of the audience and since taste plays a decisive part in realistic art, it is essential that the theatre is expressed in the best aesthetic standards. This is in consideration that human behavior proceeds along theatrical lines. The theatre being the most human and universal art of all is practiced not just on the stage but also in everyday life. The theatre's success lies in transforming the audience, which is only possible if the aesthetic standards are definitely high.¹⁵¹

Considering that all the three theatre groups were subcontracted to run projects for nongovernmental organizations, the influence of these NGOs cannot be gainsaid. It was evidently apparent that the NGOs had a specific agenda they wanted to propagate in the specific communities they targeted. The respective NGOs therefore influenced the messages and the means of communicating those specific messages through the theatre groups. For instance the performance by *Amateur theatre productions in Burumba* was scripted under the guidance and direction of the funding organization, Population Services International. The NGO was keen on ensuring their messages were carried out in the theatre and promoting their social marketing concept. This performance therefore adopted agitprop characteristics, which unfortunately could not lead to conscientisation.

¹⁵¹ See Brecht, 56.

6.3. Facilitation

Brecht emphasized upon the importance of the actors speaking directly with the audience. This was to enable the interpretation of the issues in the play to the audience. Drawing from Freire's paradigm, facilitation, which is the reflective stage of the performance, decodes issues in the play enabling the unveiling of the hidden reality. This decoding is facilitated through dialogue that promotes critical reflection. The facilitation by *Amateur*, *House of Courage* and *Sanaa* theatre groups' during their respective theatre performances was of mixed outcomes. The performance by *Amateur* in *Karibuni*, *House of Courage* in *Bamburi* and *Mtopanga* and *Sanaa* in *Ena* and *Kangaru School* depicted good facilitation. On the other hand the performances by *Amateur* in *Burumba* and *Marachi*, *House of Courage* in *Matingasi* and *Sanaa* in *Miwani* had challenges in facilitation. The challenge in these performances was mainly the limited use of interaction techniques.

The role of the actors in these performances was mainly to perform and highlight the issues in the play. As a result the facilitation had limited opportunities that would have promoted dialogue between the actors with the audience which as Ogolla points out

We still have a wide discrepancy in theater skills in this region, but especially in Kenya. A TFD program is often predictable from the beginning to the end. TFD workers need to network more, exchange

practical skills so that they do not walk the same old beaten path of a song here, a dance there, a play, followed by some manipulated discussion.¹⁵²

With a much keener focus on the performances by the three troupes, *Amateur theatre productions* did not manage to hold any meaningful dialogue with the audience in *Burumba*. Instead the facilitator sought for questions from the audience, in the absence of which he delivered a mini lecture. Nonetheless, the performance in *Marachi* was much better than *Burumba* but it was still evident that there were opportunities to improve on facilitation. The script for this performance was generally open ended and the acting was generally good save for the facilitation.

The facilitation session began with a freeze of the play at the key dramatic moment. At this juncture, the facilitator for the session began with closed ended and factual questions that did not polarize the audience. The audience was therefore not catalyzed to take positions on the issue at stake to facilitate dialogue and discussion. This resulted in a deadlock in the performance since after asking a few questions, the facilitator ran out of questions and the audience was left staring at him. Sensing desperation, his fellow troupe members started contributing to the session by posing as community members that presented the image of a stage-managed community outreach. Once the discussion began flowing, the facilitator still could not maintain the pace with which it had picked up. As a result of the

¹⁵² Ogolla, 28.

deficiencies listed above, audience participation was fluctuating, at one time encouraging and at other times almost dying off completely.

The performance in *Marachi* was also fluid as it kept on changing flow time and again. The change of focus was dependant on the views and interests of the audience on what kind of issue they would like to see addressed. However, the facilitator had problems in drawing a logical flow of discussion as he kept addressing the myriad of issues concurrently as they kept cropping up from the audience. The facilitator had challenges in coping with the shifts from the audience and on some occasions the discussion derailed from the main objective of the session to the new arguments being advanced by the audience. Through this, the facilitator did not exhibit full control of the session and give it focus on the issues to deal with systematically.

Instead the facilitator let the session flow by the whims of the audience and this compromised the set objective for that particular session. Moreover the facilitator had problems in sustaining the session for long and was constantly being prompted by fellow performers on issues that he could address to keep the discussion going. The discussion was also not wrapped up as issues were left hanging and also various opportune questions seemed to be emerging from the audience but were not captured by the facilitator to enhance the session. This minimal use of facilitation techniques that could help enhance the alienation effect did not trigger

the audience into reflective thinking. The facilitation therefore did not engage the audience into deeper questioning and hence reflection on the issues at stake.

In my discussions with the practitioners from *Amateur Theatre Productions*, the group noted that the structure of performance that they applied in *Burumba* was dictated by the funding agency. The group therefore had to conform to what was decided upon by the funding agency since they lacked complete freedom in determining the mode of performance. The interest of the funding agency in that case was to promote social marketing of their products rather than promote community conscientisation. In that case therefore, the facilitation mode they employed did not enable conscientisation but instead adopted the agitprop methodology. The performance in *Marachi* was geared towards promoting conscientisation but the facilitator displayed limited knowledge on the vast array of Boalian facilitation techniques. These techniques are ideally what would have been used to enhance the reflective process in these performances. Selected troupe members noted an orientation on some of these techniques although they were applied in limited circumstances in the other performance in *Karibuni*.

It also emerged that despite knowledge on facilitation techniques, there was limited application during the performances. This as was attested by the performers' was that they lacked confidence on using these techniques. In other instances as depicted above, there was complete lack of knowledge on these

techniques. One interesting finding that emerged from this study was that training of theatre practitioners did not necessarily translate to a perfection of skills. As it emerged, the *Amateur* and *House of Courage* theatre practitioners had been trained in theatre for development. But then in spite of undergoing training, they still had challenges in facilitation. On the other hand the practitioners from *Sanaa theatre group* had not undergone any formal training yet they executed some of the facilitation techniques with precision.

Facilitation challenges were not unique only to *Amateur theatre productions* since they were also evident in the *House of Courage* performance in *Matingasi* and the *Sanaa* performance in *Miwani*. In these performances, the facilitation did not challenge the audience members into deep reflection of the situation at hand. This would have been essential to promote deeper reflection. The facilitators for these performances mainly relied on the right answer syndrome. Ideally the facilitators agreed to all the views from the audience whether right or wrong without necessarily challenging those views. During these performances, most of the views from the audience were not subjected to deeper and reflective thinking. In fact some of the discussions with members of the audience resembled pre-rehearsed answers rather than deeper reflection. The challenge with this facilitation is that it does not permit in-depth analysis of issues, which as Okagbu observes

This mode of intervention merely creates ripples in the pond of the oppressed, which returns to its relative calm when the buzz or excitement of the ripples is gone.¹⁵³

On the other hand during the performance by *Amateur* in *Karibuni*, the *House of Courage* performances in *Bamburi* and *Mtopanga* as well as the *Sanaa* performances in *Ena* and *Kangaru School* proved that proper use of facilitation techniques attain the alienation effect. In these performances, the facilitators triggered conscientisation through deeper probing. They also utilized facilitation techniques such as hot seating the audience members and asking them to step into the shoes of a character. During these performances, the audience members were challenged to change their views and opinions hence inspiring critical thinking. For instance during the performance in *Karibuni* by *Amateur theatre productions*, an audience member insisted that the young girl should just have sex with the sugar daddy and get the money. The facilitator in this performance challenged the participant if he would do the same to his sister. Faced with this new scenario, the audience member jumped ship and admitted “*enyewe tuseme ukweli, kama ni dada yangu ikae*” (*Lets speak the truth, if it is my sister let it stay*). This performance had good facilitation that was able to invoke deeper reflection and hence critical thinking of the issues at stake.

Good facilitation is not a means of passing on fixed ideas so that community members begin to think and act in ‘proper’ ways. Rather it is a means for creating

¹⁵³ Quoted in K. Salhi, *African Theatre for Development*, Intellect, 1998. 32.

and sustaining dialogue in the community that will lead the community members towards the desired reflection. These performances where facilitation was good managed to build the confidence of the community members in their ability to instigate change. They empowered the community to try out new ideas that they would not usually risk under normal conditions. All in all, the facilitators from the three troupes had a vast array of facilitation techniques such as stepping into the shoes of a character, hot seating a character, still life depiction, and advising a character. Also the strategy of facilitation in role would also have worked well here. Unfortunately these techniques were employed in minimal circumstances in the performances save for a few. Yet the underutilization of these techniques partly contributed to the under realization of the alienation effect in some of the performances.

Limited ice breaking was a major barrier to audience participation in some of the performances. This was evident during the performance by *Amateur* in *Marachi* where the audience was at first reluctant to dialogue with the performers. The audience was reluctant to participate in discussion and seemed repulsive. This created an element of tension as the discussions commenced with fewer audience members willing to dialogue with the actors. At the commencement of this performance, activities were mostly restricted to the actors through song and dance in a closed inner circle facing each other, which created a spectacle. The community members stood outside in a peripheral circle awaiting the completion

of this activity. Having gathered a sizeable crowd, the actors commenced the performances. In this scenario, the performers did not co-opt the community in these initial activities.

In essence the performers commenced the performance without creating adequate rapport with the audience. The inability to conduct joint ice breaking activities with the community members did not break the barriers to participation. Limited trust therefore existed between the performers with the audience that would enable dialogue. Essentially, a lot of transformative powers exist in the performance space and can only be unleashed by creating an aura of freedom. It is the realization of this freedom that avoids alienating the spectator from the actors and instead alienates them from the issues through critical reflection.

6.4. Conclusion

In this chapter, I analyzed the main barriers to the appropriation of the alienation effect. These mainly dealt with acting, facilitation, scripting, interaction with the audience and also training and capacity building. In the discussion, it emerged that mainly these challenges hinder theatre for development from attaining the alienation effect. In essence therefore, I have argued of the need to work towards eliminating these challenges if theatre for development is to attain conscientisation. As a starting point, the next chapter proposes some recommendations on dealing with a number of these challenges.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1. Introduction

This study set out to analyze the appropriation of Brecht's alienation effect in the theatre for development practices of *Amateur*, *Sanaa* and *House of Courage* theatre troupes. I narrowed the focus to four aspects namely the performance space, the play/script, acting and narration/facilitation. In doing this, the study drew impetus from Freire's conscientisation paradigm in that for conscientisation (read development) to be initiated, the intended beneficiaries need to partake in dialogue. Through dialogue, communities identify their problems, question and reflect on why those problems exist and with an elevated understanding act to solve those problems. I therefore sought to analyze the realization of this Freirian development paradigm through the use of alienation techniques in select theatre for development practices.

Emanating from this study was the unshakable evidence of a growing demand and use of theatre for development programs in the community. It also emerged that theatre for development is a relatively developing genre in Kenya. A lot of milestones have been realized in the development of the genre. Nonetheless, there is need to ensure that this genre is nurtured in the best way possible. This therefore calls for concerted efforts from all the stakeholders to address the many

shortcomings that hinder the realization of its full potential. Suffice it to say that the genres' main controlling interest is mainly vested in nongovernmental organizations with keen interests in community development. The theatre troupes we used in this study therefore had attachments to NGOs which supported their theatre outreaches.

7.2. General Observations and Synthesis of the Findings

A brief background on the essence and or use of the Brechtian alienation effect in previous and current theatre for development practices was the focus of the first chapter. It mapped the causes and course of this study, charting a way forward after reviewing related and relevant work. This background gave impetus to this study as it helped shape the focus mainly being modeled around three key objectives:

1. To map the present use of theatre for development by nongovernmental organizations in Kenya.
2. To identify and evaluate the appropriation of Brecht's alienation effect by selected theatre for development troupes.
3. To assess the challenges theatre for development practitioners face in appropriating the alienation effect.

Each objective was subsequently addressed in a chapter of its own while Brecht's theory of the alienation effect underpinned the critical analysis of the theatre for development practices of *Amateur*, *Sanaa* and *House of Courage* theatre troupes.

In my first submission, I sought for an understanding of the development paradigm which defined the framework within which I was to analyze the effectiveness of the alienation effect. The developmental framework adopted was Freire's conscientisation paradigm. It further emerged that the Freirian concept of development is mainly spearheaded by nongovernmental organizations in Kenya, many using theatre to realize that end. With this avowal, I retraced the transitional steps theatre for development has undergone in Kenya. As the literature review revealed, theatre was used by the colonial administrators for educating the illiterate masses before transitioning into a tool for people's empowerment in the immediate post colonial period. Nonetheless political 'highhandedness' banned community theatre enterprises such as 'Kamiriithu theatre' on the fear that theatre was being used as a tool for political dissidence.

The resurgence of theatre for development was in the early nineties through a constitutional amendment that reopened the democratic space. This democratic space was mainly optimized by NGOs advocating for political reforms and other forms of grassroots empowerment. It is through this advocacy that the current theatre for development practice draws its laurels and practice. Through this, chapter two provided the context of theatre for development in Kenya. It also charted the possibilities for redirecting this practice in the light of Brecht's alienation effect.

My main data collection method was by observation where I attended theatre performances by the three troupes and observed the use of these techniques. This was supported with interviews administered to the performers, audience members and key resource persons. From the findings, most of the theatre for development performances of *Amateur*, *Sanaa* and *House of Courage* managed to appropriate some elements of Brecht's alienation effect. That notwithstanding, some other performances failed to appropriate the alienation effect. In the performances where they succeeded in appropriation, the techniques were evident at the level of staging/performance space, the play/script, acting and finally narration/facilitation. This constituted chapter three four and five which were the analytical chapters where I reviewed the use of the alienation effect in the theatre for development performances.

In my second submission, I argued with Brecht that if theatre for development was to attain Freire's conscientisation then it needed a paradigmatic shift. This shift was from the theatre that intoxicated the spectator by supplying him with illusions. My premise was that such illusionary theatre reconciles the spectator to his fate. On the contrary there was need for a theatre that would enable the spectator critique the issues presented in the theatre. This would provide one with an elevated understanding and perception, elevating them towards conscientisation. I worked with the alienation effect as the catalytic agent for propelling this intention. The essence of the alienation effect as O'Farrell affirms is that "one's

familiar experiences are shattered into little recognizable pieces that s/he is able to put together upon reflection. The outcome of this reflection is a shift of perspectives as a result of the encounter with experiences that have been reflected upon.”¹⁵⁴

In my final submission, I noted that the theoretical model for theatre for development avoids use of illusionistic elements just as Brecht. The goal was to purge the stage of everything magical such as sets that convey the flavor of a particular place, lighting effects and sound effects. The removal of illusion was also at the level of scripting and acting where the actors need not allow themselves to become completely transformed on the stage into the character they are portraying. It also implied dropping the fourth wall assumption so that the actors can even talk directly to the audience. These were the critical tools of analysis which I analyzed their use in the performances by the three troupes. Suffice to say that some of the theatre for development performances by the three troupes fell short of appropriating some of these aspects of the alienation effect. From my observation and follow up interviews, it emerged that challenges relating to acting, facilitation, lack of training and theatre experience contributed to deficiencies in appropriation of the alienation effect. This was the subject matter of the fourth chapter.

¹⁵⁴ See Lawrence O’Farrell, *Building a better world through drama education: educational drama as catalyst for cultural identity and community development* in O. Mumma, E. Mwangi and C. Odhiambo. *Orientalisms of Drama, Theatre and Culture*, Nairobi, KDEA, 1998. 8.

7.3. Specific Findings from the Groups

The influence of nongovernmental organizations in the theatre for development practices of *Amateur*, *Sanaa* and *House of Courage* theatre troupes cannot be gainsaid. As outlined in Chapter two, theatre for development has undergone several transformations culminating in the renaissance in the early nineties. This renaissance is what has signaled the mushrooming of groups such as *Amateur*, *Sanaa* and *House of Courage* theatre troupes. These troupes mainly respond to the empowerment needs of the grassroots communities through support from nongovernmental organizations. As such the ability or inability of these theatre troupes to appropriate the alienation effect is vested in the NGOs that hold the controlling interest of these theatre troupes. It emerged that the theatre practices of these troupes are shaped and determined by the respective NGOs hence positioning them as critical determinants on the theatre practices of the troupes. The groups mainly gained their theatre for development skills through capacity building by the respective NGOs. The appropriation of the alienation effect therefore goes beyond just the theatre troupes to the responsible NGOs that control the theatre practices of the troupes. The appropriating of the alienation effect therefore emanates more from the NGOs which percolate the theatre skills to the theatre troupes.

Performance space is one element that was well appropriated by the three groups. The three performances by *Amateur* in '*Burumba*', '*Marachi*' and '*Karibuni*' were

all held in open community spaces and hence managed to eliminate the fourth wall concept. The same was true of the *House of Courage* performances in ‘*Bamburi*’, ‘*Matingasi*’ and ‘*Mtopanga*’. For *Sanaa* the performances in ‘*Miwani*’ and ‘*Ena*’ too eliminated the fourth wall concept but this was not the case with the ‘*Kangaru school*’ performance. This last performance was held in a school hall which created the ‘fourth wall’ concept which promoted illusion.

Concerning scripting, the scripts used in the *Amateur* performance in ‘*Burumba*’ and the *Sanaa* performance in ‘*Miwani*’ were not problem posing in nature. Instead these scripts helped propagate Aristotelian illusion that works towards catharsis. Unfortunately catharsis does not lead to conscientisation which I propagated in this study. On the other hand the performances by *Amateur* in ‘*Marachi*’ and ‘*Karibuni*’ and the performances by *Sanaa* in ‘*Ena*’ and ‘*Kangaru*’ as well as all the three performances by *House of Courage* were problem posing in nature. These problem posing scripts had well developed conflicts and also had loosely tied plots that were easily noticeable unlike the ‘*Burumba*’ and ‘*Miwani*’ scripts hence conforming to Brecht’s alienation effect.

On acting, plays by *Amateur* and *House of Courage* were of higher aesthetics compared to the *Sanaa* performances. The acting by *Sanaa* on many occasions left quite a lot to be desired with lower aesthetic standards. But most important the performance by *Amateur* in ‘*Burumba*’ did not distance the actors from their

characters they were playing. The performances by *Amateur* in ‘*Marachi*’ and ‘*Karibuni*’ by nature of the introduction and well developed conflicts in the plays managed to distance the actors from the character roles. All the three performances by *Sanaa* did not distance the actors from their characters at the commencement of the performance. They however managed to do this at the conclusion of the performance which was a bit late though not completely lost. The performance by *Sanaa* in ‘*Miwani*’ by its poorly developed conflict did not distance the actors since it did not help widen the social rifts among the audience as the other two did. All the three performances by *House of Courage* managed to distance the actors from their character through the introduction. Also by virtue of well developed conflicts in the plays they managed to widen the social rifts among the audience members in the performance hence distancing the actors and hence promoting the alienation effect.

Regarding narration, all the three groups used a facilitator who played the narratorial role in their performances. The facilitation by *Amateur* in ‘*Burumba*’ did not however appropriate the alienation effect. The two performances in ‘*Marachi*’ and ‘*Karibuni*’ did manage to appropriate elements of the alienation effect in facilitation. For *House of Courage*, all their three performances appropriated elements of the alienation effect although questions of quality still abound. Ideally the facilitation especially in ‘*Matingasi*’ and partly in ‘*Mtopanga*’ almost fell short of conscientisation since it did not really engage the audience in

deeper reflection. The *Sanaa* performances in ‘*Ena*’ and ‘*Kangaru*’ exhibited proper appropriation of the alienation effect and hence deeper and critical reflection. The performance in ‘*Miwani*’ did not however augur very well as far as the appropriation of the alienation effect was concerned. This performance did not exhibit good facilitation.

7.4. Recommendations for Future Research Directions

I conducted this study within the stated scope and limitations with a view of analyzing the appropriation of Brecht’s alienation effect in theatre for development in Kenya. I narrowed the scope to three groups’ namely *Amateur*, *Sanaa* and *House of Courage* theatre troupes. The fear of analyzing too wide and less depth led me to limit the scope to the three groups where I attended three performances by each group. I also focused on specific aspects of the alienation effect namely performance space, the play/script, acting and narration. Nevertheless, the following areas provide research directions for further scholarship in line with the present study:

There is need to interrogate the training curriculums used by many NGOs for capacity building of the theatre troupes. Since many groups mainly gain their skills through training, this is an area that greatly impacts on the theatre practice thereafter.

Similarly the question of ethics cannot be gainsaid. Apparently by the fact that theatre for development is mainly controlled by NGO's with their own sectarian interests, it would be of interest to note how their interests' impacts on the theatre for development practice.

WORKS CITED

- Amuta, Chidi. The Theory of African Literature: Implications for Practical Criticism. London: Zed Publishers, 1989.
- Aristotle. Poetics. New York: Dover Publications, 1997.
- Banham, Martin. Gibbs, James and Osofisan, Femi. Eds. African Theatre: Playwrights and Politics. Oxford: James Currey Ltd, 2001.
- _____. African Theatre in Development. Oxford: James Currey limited, 1999.
- Bjoern, L. Forum Theatre: Kampala, IATM, 2003.
- Boal, Augusto. Theatre of the Oppressed. London: Pluto press, 1979.
- Brecht, Bertolt. Brecht on Theatre. Ed and Trans by John Willet, New York: Hill and Wang, 1974.
- Brockett, G. Oscar. Perspectives on Contemporary Theatre. Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press, 1971.
- Byam, Dale and Ngugi wa Thiongo. Community in motion: Theatre for development in Africa. New York: Bergin and Garvey, 1999.
- Byram, Martin and Moitse, Francis. “Theatre as an educational tool for extension work: A training Strategy”. Unpublished paper presented at the international conference on theatre for development, Maseru, Lesotho, 24 February – 2 March. 1985.
- Corrigan, Robert. Theatre in the Twentieth Century. Free Port-New York: Books For Libraries Press, 1963.
- Chambers, Robert. Ideas for development: Reflecting forwards. Brighton, XPS

Ltd, 2004.

Chamberlain, R. M. Chillery, L. Ogolla and O. Wandera. PET for HIV/aids

Awareness in Kenya, PLA notes, Issue 23, IIED London, 1995. 69 – 74.

Colleta, Nat. Worker-Peasant education in the People's Republic of China: adult

education during the post revolution period. Washington D.C: World Bank,

1982.

Crow, Brian and Etherton, Michael. "Popular Drama and Popular Analysis in

Africa", in Kidd, Ross and Colleta, Nat. (eds.), *Tradition for Development:*

indigenous structures and folk media in non-formal education. Berlin:

German foundation for International development and international council

for adult education, 1982.

Etherton, Michael. The development of African drama, New York, Africana

publishing company. 1982.

Fanon, Frantz. The Wretched of the Earth: London, Penguin Books, Translated by

Constance Farrington, 1963.

Freire Paulo, Pedagogy of the oppressed, Translated by Myra Bergman Ramos, the

Seabury press, New York, 1973.

Government of Kenya. Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper 2000 – 2003. Nairobi:

Government Printers, 2000.

Hatar, Augustine. Conceptual limits of development communication theory.

Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1973.

Hankook, Graham. Lords of poverty. New York: The Atlantic monthly press,

1989.

Ingrid, Bjorkman. Mother Sing for Me; Peoples Theatre in Kenya: London & New Jersey: Zed Books ltd, 1989.

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, The Communist Manifesto, edited by David McClellan, Oxford university press, oxford, 1992.

Kamlongera, Christopher. Theatre for development in Africa with case studies from Malawi and Zambia. Bonn: German foundation for international development. 1989.

Kenya, Republic. African socialism and its application in planning in Kenya. Sessional Paper no. 10 of 1965.

Kerr, David. African Popular Theatre from Pre-Colonial Times to the Present day; Studies in African literature. Oxford: James Currey Ltd, 1995.

Kidd, Ross and Byram, Martin. Demystifying pseudo-Freirian non-formal education: A Case description and analysis of Laedza Batanani. Toronto: Mimeo. 1981.

Kidd, Ross. Popular Theatre and Popular Struggle in Kenya: The story of the Kamirithu Community Educational and Cultural Centre: Theatre work vol. 2, No.6 September/October 1982.

Malamah, T and Henry, D. Innovative Community Theatre for Integrated Rural Development in Sierra Leone: The Telu workshop experience, in IFDA Dossier 70, March/ April 1989.

Mavrocordatos, Alex. "Tied up in a rope of sand: TFD: Cultural Action or

- Development Utility". In *Theatre and development Overview*. KIT, 29th April 2004.
- Mda, Zakes. When People Play People; Development Communication through Theatre. London and New Jersey: Zed Books, 1993.
- Mlama, Peninah. Culture and Development: The Popular Theatre Approach in Africa. Uppsala, Sweden, Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 1995.
- Mumma, Opiyo, Mwangi, Evan and Odhiambo, Christopher. (eds.) Orientations of Drama, Theatre and Culture. Nairobi: KDEA, 1998.
- Ngugi wa Thiong'o. Decolonizing the mind; The Politics of Language in African Literature. Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers, 1981.
- Ngugi wa Thiong'o. Detained; a writer's prison diary. Nairobi: EAEP, 1981.
- Ngugi wa Thiong'o. Moving the center; the struggle for African freedoms. Nairobi: EAEP, 1993.
- Noble, T. Social Theory and Social Change: Hampshire, Palgrave, 2000.
- Odhiambo, Christopher. "The Aesthetics of Theatre for Community Development in Kenya" In *The Nairobi Journal of Literature*, Journal of the Department of Literature, University of Nairobi. Number 1, March 2003.
- O'Toole John and Donelan Kate. Ed. Drama, Culture and Empowerment: Brisbane, IDEA publications, 1996.
- Ogolla, Lenin. Towards Behavior Change; Participatory Theatre in Education and Development. Nairobi: Petad international, 1997.
- Rajkumar, Vijay. "Theatre for development" in *The Communication Initiative*,

2002.

Rodney, Walter. *How Europe underdeveloped Africa*. Nairobi, EAEP: 1989.

Schechner, Rodgers. Performance Theory. London and New York: Routledge, 1988.

Stanislavsky, Constantin. An Actor Prepares. New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1973.

Styan, J.L. Modern Drama in Theory and Practice 1; Realism and Naturalism, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1981.

Styan, J.L. Modern Drama in Theory and Practice 1; Expressionism and Epic Theatre, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1981.

Thomson, P & sacks, G. [Ed] The Cambridge Companion to Brecht: Britain, Cambridge University Press, 1994.

UNDP. Linking Industrialization with Human Development. 4th Kenya National Human Development Report, 2006.

Williams, Raymond. Marxism and Literature: Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1977.