

The Healing Theatre: Beyond Alienation and Fixation Discourse of Three Theatrical Personalities in Bode Ojoniyi's Dramaturgy

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Abstract : This paper examines alienation and fixation as critical issues of/around mental health -crisis, sickness, and healing-through 'Bode Ojoniyi's dramaturgy. Two of his dramatic memoirs, arguably written to address such a life-threatening crisis between him and his employer, where he externalizes perhaps his psychological crisis, are critically analysed. This is done through a reading of the three theatrical phenomena of the actor, the character, and the audience against how he plays around the concepts of alienation and fixation within the totality of his dramaturgy beyond what could be seen as a mere academic exercise. The paper situates his apt understanding of their representations as a reflective force of a consciousness that defies psychosomatic existential conflicts. It does so by adopting a qualitative method of analysis through a critical reading of the two dramatic memoirs. It also carries out a survey on the audience that experienced the performances of the memoirs and an interview with Ojoniyi. Using Jean-Paul Sartre's Theory of Existential Consciousness, the study discovers that there is a way the three phenomena of the actor, the character, and the audience do find expression in Ojoniyi as an existential omniscient playwright-actor-character-audience who is able to transcend the parochialism of an alienated and a fixated self; that beyond the limiting artistic purview, the theatre as a stage is a phenomenon that is capable of capturing the totality of the experiences of a man in his world and that, often time, the depressed are victims of the myopic syndrome as they probably could not see or reflect on/about their realities beyond the self and the play of a casual order. The study concludes that the therapeutic effect of Ojoniyi's dramatic memoirs, in their reading or performance, is needed by all and should be explored in proffering cures for psychosomatic patients, for it promises to be essentially useful beyond its confine -the Arts.

Keywords : alienation, fixation, the healing theatre, theatrical personalities

Conference Title : ICPAMTD 2023 : International Conference on Performance Arts, Music, Theater and Dance

Conference Location : New York, United States

Conference Dates : January 30-31, 2023