

Scratching the Surface: Post-Colonial Anglophone African Drama and the Chant of Disillusionment

Ndubuisi Nnanna
&
Ikechukwu Erojikwe

Department of Theatre and Film Studies
University of Nigeria Nsukka

Abstract

This paper argues, from the perspective of post-colonial literary criticism, that the recurrent reference to post-colonial disillusionment by many Anglophone African dramatists perpetuates a form of colonial mentality; inasmuch as such references do not establish a connection between the failure of emerging African leaders to fulfill the legitimate expectations of the led, and the systematic manipulation of the political processes in the newly independent African states by the erstwhile British colonial authorities.

A popular concern of the average post-colonial African dramatist is the extent to which the emerging leaders of African countries have lived up to the expectations of the masses after independence. In most cases the score cards leave so much to be desired. Post-colonial disillusionment is, therefore, a recurrent subject matter in much of modern African drama and it defines a majority of the themes, whether they are political, social, or economic in nature. Curiously, however, so many of these plays ignore the critical connection between the nature of colonial disengagement and the quality of succession.

The prevalence of the omission identified above will be demonstrated by the examination of plays selected from three regions of Africa: Eastern,

Western, and Northern. Southern Africa has been deliberately omitted. The reason is that because of the peculiar character of their colonial experiences most Southern African dramatists produced mainly protest plays that were largely concerned with racial inequality. The selected plays are John Ruganda's *The Floods*, Esiaba Irobi's *Hangmen Also Die* and Tewfik Al-Hakim's *Fate of a Cockroach*; from Uganda, Nigeria, and Egypt respectively. The consideration for selecting the countries is the affinity of their colonial realities; being all former British colonies.

The theoretical framework adopted for this research is post-colonialism. The reason for this approach goes beyond the fact that all of the selected plays come under the ambit of post-colonial drama, but also because post-colonial criticism is necessarily concerned with the re-examination of the consequences of colonial experiences. It is an inquiry into the nature of relationships between two unmatched cultures and their defining ideologies as reflected in literatures of the less privileged culture, which is also the colonized. It is an investigation into the implications of colonization on literary culture. According to Charles Bressler, post-colonialism "...is a critical approach that focuses on literatures written in English in hitherto colonized countries" (265). As part of the broader Cultural Studies, post-colonialism is interested in the details of history and culture as defining factors of identity. Unlike New Critical methods that pay minimal attention to historical and cultural relativity in the interpretation of texts, post-colonialism is "... concerned with the world as it exists during and after the period of European imperial domination and the effects of this on contemporary literatures" (Ashcroft, Gareth, and Tiffin 2). The Post-colonial critical attitude is usually interested in the dynamics of power and class stratification because, as one of the major figures in Post-colonial studies Edward Said says, "... ideas, cultures, and histories cannot seriously be

understood or studied without their force, or more precisely their configurations of power, also being studied” (5). This study will, therefore, situate the chosen plays in the contexts of their historical and political backgrounds as mediated by peculiar and shared colonial experiences, to determine how their representations of post-colonial disillusionment is justified or otherwise.

In *The Floods* John Ruganda explores in detail the socio-political atmosphere in post-independent Uganda. He captures the extreme abuse of power and the horror that the average Ugandan lived in during the regimes of Idi Amin and Milton Obote. Ruganda starts the play with a very graphic description that paints a dark picture of a troubled society buffeted by ominous and uncontrollable forces:

An Island in Lake Victoria. Intermittent growls of thunder and flashes of lightning. The sky is dark with clouds of rain. Offstage: Shouts, cries and all manner of noise from stampeding men, women and children-the last batch that is fleeing the Island (1).

The Island is about to be engulfed in a flood. The Headman of the Island enters, calling on the other inhabitants to board a boat and escape the flood.

Headman: The boat is leaving... the boat's leaving and any moment now! ... The boat is leaving any moment from now! Ten minutes to go and the boat will be off! Just ten minutes and goodbye to the floods! You heard what the radio said... in three hours the floods will ravage this island (1).

The flood is, of course, used as a symbol of impending doom; an image that immediately conjures up the precarious situation of the country under the hegemony of overwhelming dictatorship.

The Headman in the play epitomizes neo-colonial leaders that exploit every misfortune to pose as the savior of the masses who must fall in place or be

crushed by the astounding might of some malevolent state machinery. Despite his charitable posturing, he is an agent of oppression. His true nature is soon revealed during Kyeyune's exchange with Bwogo, when the former describes the Headman as "... the very man who spits at our wrinkles and whips the orphans... who is having more than his share of the widows" (11). Another agent of oppression is Bwogo. He is the first cousin to the principal tyrant, satirically identified as "Boss" and "Benevolent Father of the Republic". He is equally chairman of the Building Board and head of the State Research Bureau- the dreaded Ugandan secret police that inflicted untold terror on perceived enemies of the state. In *Third Wave*, JWM alludes to Nankya's description of Bwogo as "... a bourgeois poet,... perched on the pedestal of exploitation, excessively dressed, expensively housed and, to cup it all, perpetually exuding his fumes of cognac and champagne on to the under-privileged- the millions of mice in society that make do with the crumbs" (22). In what appears to be an unintended confession to Nankya in *Second Wave*, Bwogo gives an insight into the extent of terror that has been unleashed on the inhabitants of the Island by the forces of oppression:

Bwogo: "... this lake harbors its own unfathomable secrets... it has been the tomb of many men... lorryful of wailing civilians, driven to their deaths, over the cliffs, at the point of bayonets. The crocodiles have never been more thankful" (19).

The principal tyrant is Boss. Though he doesn't appear in the play, the references made to him by other characters are sufficient to cast his image on marble. He is the dictator, the political ruler dislocated from his own people and whose concern is only with his own comfort. He is Idi Amin and Milton Obote rolled into one. In the *Second Wave*, the radio announcer warns the inhabitants of the endangered island to evacuate immediately to avoid the impending flood, adding that "The Republican Navy will come to

rescue stranded inhabitants after it has escorted the Benevolent Father of the Republic who is leading a Peace Keeping Delegation to..." (15). Nankya does not allow the announcer to finish but the much that he has said is enough to reveal the irony of a 'demi-god' leader who is incapable of saving his own domain but who goes on a peace-keeping mission abroad. It is equally ridiculous that the so-called Republican Navy prioritizes the escort of the "Benevolent Father of the Republic" on his vainglorious mission above the safety of the stranded islanders.

Kyeyune, on the other hand, represents the masses of the dispossessed in Uganda; the very common man whose expectations for a better life after colonialism has been aborted on the altar of neocolonial trepidation. He is a traumatized old fisherman, haunted by the memory of a horrendous encounter, which captures the stark brutality of the Amin-Obote era in Uganda. He tells Headman about going on his regular fishing expedition on the fateful day. After a long and fruitless day, his net finally caught on something heavy. He describes the gory sight to Headman:

Kyeyune: Do you know what it was, son? A man. A military man. Dead. Three long nails in his head, his genitals sticking out in his mouth. A big stone around his neck. His belly ripped open and the intestines oozing out... what had he done to come to such an unmourned- for end?...I don't know son. But if there are men who can rip our bellies open, drill nails in our skulls and stuff our mouths with our own genitals, why have I lived long enough to see my head grey? Since then, son, I have never left this Island. I gave up fishing once and for all (10).

Here we see an acclaimed fisherman who is forced to abandon his source of living and joy as a result of a devastating experience. This gives us a sense of some of the collateral damages suffered by ordinary Ugandans as a result of the state terrorism that was rampant in post-independent Uganda. A few months after that initial incident, Kyenyue was again confronted with another unpalatable encounter. This time, he discovered a human finger in

the bowels of some fish he was eating and vowed not to eat fish ever again. So he lost not only his source of livelihood, but his appetite as well. So we can understand his utter frustration and defiance when he laments the changing fortunes of the Island in his confrontation with Bwogo:

Kyenuye: Leave us alone. We have lived on this Island tolerably well before the Ogre came on the scene, heralded by fronds and frenzied shouts.

Bwogo: What Ogre are you talking about?

Kyenuye: The one that everybody calls Boss.

Bwogo: That's a dangerous thing to say.

Kyenuye: I know as you do not that when the beckon calls, he will gallop into the net. Big or small no one can resist the call of the beckon. It's a matter of time (12).

Nankya represents the enlightened class who have seen beyond the smokescreen of state propaganda and realigned themselves with the oppressed. She is Byogo's ex-girlfriend, a literary and social critic, and apart from Kyenuye, she is the other character in the play that reveals the level of decadence, squalor and hopelessness on the Island. She describes the Island as a place with people that are "... starving, deprived, degraded, denied their rightful place in the sun... graduates groveling in dustbins in search of sustenance... temples tainted with martyred blood and, above all, uncertainty and death. Death stalking the streets like thousands of soldiers on the beat" (29).

Through an extensive use of imagery and symbolism, John Ruganda depicts the superlative level of pain, anguish and disillusionment in post-colonial Uganda. Rose Mbowa rightly submits that,

John Ruganda exposed the power of Amin's murder squad in *The Floods* (1979). The drowned body of a Brigadier that keeps popping up fits the portrait of a victim of Amin's murderous henchmen-a nail in the skull, genital stuffed in the teeth. The drowning of islanders in a fake rescue mission and the finding of a finger in the bowels of a fish points to the massacres at that time (92).

Ruganda's play creatively communicates how the Ugandan people suffered under the unpopular regime of Field Marshal Idi Amin, who continued Milton Obote's repressive tendencies from the very dawn of Ugandan independence. But it is important to examine the remote factors that contributed or even led to the current situation in the play. This is embedded in Ugandan colonial history.

In 1894 Britain forcefully removed King Kabarega and assumed protectorate control over Uganda. Thus, colonialism started with the deposing of chiefs that were against the British. During this period also the kingdom of Buganda enjoyed a lot of benefits from the British colonialists thereby making them more prominent than the other kingdoms. Nelson Kasfir acknowledges this fact when he posits that, "...the British encouraged farmers in Buganda to grow coffee, which became increasingly profitable. Consequently, People in Buganda grew healthy faster, received better education and obtained more positions in the public service than those from other areas". (np)

Uganda eventually gained independence in 1962, and the emerging political leaders, notably Milton Obote and Idi Amin, tore the new nation apart. There was extreme looting of national wealth under. In fact as early as 1966, the then Prime Minister Milton Obote and his accomplice Idi Amin, who was deputy commander of the armed forces, were found guilty in a gold smuggling deal. When the Ugandan parliament attempted to probe the crime Obote jettisoned the country's constitution and declared himself Executive President. For four decades after independence, Ugandans suffered so much terror, nepotism, genocide, corruption and moral decadence. These crystallized into what we can refer to as post colonial disillusionment aptly captured by dramatists like John Ruganda.

Esiaba Irobi's *Hangmen Also Die*, is set in the Niger-Delta area of modern Nigeria. It treats the contemporary issues of political irresponsibility, mass oppression and exploitation, glorification of hedonism, miscarriage of justice, as well as betrayal of public confidence. The part of the country which produces most of the oil that fills the national treasury is left to suffer and deteriorate in unmitigated squalor, reminiscent of unashamed colonial exploitation and institutionalized extortion. Irobi, through excellent narrative, evocative imagery, effective use of flash backs and incisive dialogue, is able to portray how impoverished the masses are and how poverty turns even the educated into renegades. The members of The Suicide Squad are educated but disillusioned. Waritimi Tamuno, alias MORTUARY, holds a first class degree in Statistics; Atiemie Waribo, alias MOSHE DAYAN, has a graduate degree in Political Science; Labomie Allagoa, alias AYATOLLAH KHOMEINI, has a Law degree; Tekena Iketubosin, alias HYDROCHLORIC ACID, has a graduate degree in Microbiology; Konji AMAKARAMA, alias TETANUS, is a qualified mechanical engineer; Fubara Igonikon, alis ACCIDENTAL DISCHARGE, has a Bachelor's degree in Social Welfare and a Master's in Guidance and Counseling; and Tarila Iganima, alias R.I.P. has B.A., M.A., and Ph.D. degrees in Sociology, Anthropology, and Criminology, respectively. Despite their qualifications, they are all unemployed and have been forced into crime. Their frustration is captured in the following chant:

DAYAN: Graduates of glittering citadels.

R.I.P.: The leaders of tomorrow.

CHORUS: Our job in this nation is to look for jobs.

(Progressively the chant gets angrier and hotter)

R.I.P.: We have no jobs.

ACID: Therefore we have no money.

DAYAN: Which means we cannot marry.

R.I.P.: And consequently cannot have children.

CHORUS: We are the rejects of the world.

R.I.P.: So, if today, we have turned to violence as the only weapon to redeem our destiny, redeem our fate, our future and our manhood. It is because... (31).

The Suicide Squad, as Irobi calls them, forms what might be called the devil's alternative for the dispossessed youths.

The play also displays how politicians use gullible youths to carry out some criminal activities as is the case with Dr. Ahitophel Ogbansiegbe, who uses the boys to get back at his erstwhile political rivals and enemies. There are also some local leaders, like Chief Isokipiri Erekosima, who connive with government officials to fleece the ordinary people. In this play, Esiaba Irobi has used an oil producing community as a canvass to paint a dismal image of a country at the brink of lawlessness and gross national decadence. The issue of production and distribution of wealth becomes a scale to weigh the nature of relationships between the government and the masses and among social classes. This state of affairs is a timeworn phenomenon in Nigeria.

Irobi, uses the fearless Tamara to upset the status quo which favoured Chief Erekosima, and achieve a change of fortune in the play. Through her enigmatic speech, she is able to transform the 'petty thief' Suicide Squad members into freedom fighters. She confronts them headlong and challenges the legitimacy of the method they have adopted to assert themselves:

TAMARA: Your mates in other parts of the world are guerilla fighters, fighting for the liberation of their country. Haven't you heard of the Red Brigade of Italy who kidnapped their Prime Minister and murdered him because he could not find them jobs? Haven't you heard of the Frelimo of Mozambique? The M.P.L.A. of Angola? The A.N.C. of Azania? The Mujahhidin of Afghanistan? The Mau Mau of Kenya and the SWAPO of Namibia? Young men dying for their land. Here you hide in the bush and burgle people's houses in the night. Petty thieves. If you are destined to be thieves why don't you become big time thieves instead of pickpockets picking the fleas from the armpits of the poor. A man has three million naira belonging to you in his house and you are here

choking on crumbs of bread. What kind of young men are you? (62).

Her inflammatory speech makes them kidnap and hang Chief Erekosima, who had embezzled the three million naira belonging to their community. In *Hangmen Also Die*, Esiaba Irobi evocatively captures the age long agony of oil producing communities in Nigeria at the hands of irresponsible governments and community leaders.

The discovery of oil in Nigeria has been a major source of the country's problems. And the catalyst of this problem was prepared by the colonialists that favoured the northern part of the country over the southern, which was the source of most of the oil wealth. Nigeria became an independent state in 1960. Sir Abubakar Tafewa Balewa, an Hausa/Fulani from the North and a British knight became the first Prime Minister, while Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe from the South became the ceremonial President. Independent Nigeria suffered a lot of disillusionment right from the day the Union Jack was brought down. There was fear of subjugation and oppression and with the census of 1963, the Akintola saga in the West and the insensitivity and wide spread corruption of government; it became obvious that Nigeria was on the verge of collapse right after independence. When Kaduna Nzeogwu and his fellow revolutionaries struck on January 15 1966, they claimed that they were disillusioned about the wide spread corruption, lies, and the failure of government to deliver democratic dividends to the Nigerian people. With the oil boom of the 70s, it was expected that life would become better for Nigerians, but things never got better. Succeeding Nigerian leaders kept siphoning the national treasury, thus turning the country into a beggar nation. The leaders blatantly abused the political offices they occupied and the use of government apparatuses like the military, the police and courts to destroy the common Nigerian became an everyday affair.

Al-Hakim's *Fate of a Cockroach* provides us with a relevant material to analyze the alienated individual in a post colonial society battling with the reality of collective depression. In this play Adil lives under severe psychological conflict with his wife. He cannot assert his authority, and when the ideal moment creates itself with the emergence of the cockroach, he simply identifies himself with it and its struggle to be free. The Doctor makes this corollary in his conversation with Samia:

SAMIA: He is always stating that I boss him and make him obey my orders and tyrannize him.

DOCTOR: Tyrannize him?

SAMIA: That's what he says.

DOCTOR: Then he believes or imagines that you are tyrannizing him?

SAMIA: Yes.

DOCTOR: My diagnosis is appropriate.

SAMIA: What diagnosis?

SAMIA: This question of the cockroach.

SAMIA: And what's the connection?

DOCTOR: You want to do away with the cockroach and he wants to save it from your hands.

SAMIA: You mean, Doctor...

DOCTOR: Yes, in his inner consciousness he has identified himself with the cockroach, and this is the secret of his concern and affection for it (55).

Adil's desire to liberate himself from domestic oppression is relative to the freedom he seeks from his oppressive environment. His hope that the cockroach would triumph over the challenge posed by the slippery bathtub brings the psychological relief he seeks. The cockroach's slipping and falling portrays the fluctuations in Adil's being. In his mind he has the will to assert his authority, but in reality, he slips and falls at Samia's orders. Thus, in Adil we see the disillusion of an individual whose aspiration for personal freedom is jeopardized by the restrictions of his own immediate environment. He is helpless since he cannot change his fate.

The parallel world of the insects captures the typical failed state complete with all the trappings of megalomania, nepotism, charlatanism, and mediocrity encouraged by a good dose of mass apathy. The cockroaches find themselves helpless in the face of recurrent attacks by the ants for the simple reason that the leaders lack the basic knowledge of political organization and administration. The root of the problem is clearly in the flawed process of political recruitment. Al-Hakim identifies the pillars of state as being the political class (represented by the King), the bureaucracy (represented by the Minister), the Intelligentsia (represented by Savant), and the religious leaders (represented by the Priest). The considerations that qualified each of these persons for the offices they hold and the reasons for their selection are very ridiculous:

KING: ... I was really delighted at the length of my whiskers. I immediately rose up and challenged all the cockroaches to compare their whiskers with mine, and that if it was apparent that mine were the longest then I should become king over them all...

QUEEN: ... But what are your Minister's talents?

KING: His consummate concern with proposing disconcerting problems and producing unpleasant news.

QUEEN: And the Priest, what are his talents?

KING: The completely incomprehensible things he says.

QUEEN: And the learned Savant?

KING: The strange information he has about everything that have no existence other than in his own head.

QUEEN: And what induced you to put up with these people?

KING: Necessity. I found no one but them wanting to be close to me. They are in need of someone to whom they can pour out their absurdities, whereas I am in need of close companions who will call me 'Your Majesty' (5).

The obvious use of hyperbole apart, the above aptly captures the utter recklessness and impunity that frames the constitution of political leadership in many post-colonial African states. It is little wonder then that in the face of clear and present danger, as that posed by the ants; the leading

cockroaches are clueless and helpless. Instead they are preoccupied with personal aggrandizement and bulk passing at the expense of territorial and economic security. And the masses, who are disillusioned, find consolation in silence and escapist indulgences.

The existentialist situation in *Fate of a Cockroach* reflects the socio-political reality of Egypt. Egypt is a nation that transcends time. The country happens to be one of the most prominent in world and African history. Recorded history indicates that Egypt is one of the world's greatest civilizations. This is reflected in Egyptian architecture, science, medicine, and art. Summarily Egyptian culture depicts the beauty, grandeur, aesthetics, and zenith of the African essence. The British took over occupation of Egypt from 1882 to 1952. Unfortunately, more than half a century later Egyptians are still struggling to determine their own future. The recent massive unrest in the country, was driven by the resistance of the Muslim Brotherhood; an Egyptian nationalist movement founded by Hassan Al Bannah in 1928 that is committed to Islamic fundamentalist causes and opposes Western influence.

It is undeniable that it was mass disillusionment that led to the recent unrest in Egypt and in several other Arab nations as part of what has come to be known as the "Arab Spring", but it could be observed that the British had some sort of 'Pilate syndrome' complicity in the remote causes of the Egyptian political problem, as will be seen below.

The foregoing has been a fundamental exploration of the selected plays in the context of their background materials. It is clear that the authors of the plays have commented on the state of affairs in their respective countries and these taken together, no doubt connect the different threads of individual national circumstances into a monolithic fabric of continental experience.

So the post-colonial situations in many African states become at once both peculiar and common. Therefore, the plays seem to read like different chapters in the same book. In the same way, the authors seem to be guilty of omitting one crucial factor, which is arguably even more fundamental than the opprobrium of post-colonial leadership in Africa. That lacuna is the inspiration for this paper's argument: the failure of many African dramatists to make a direct connection between post-colonial disillusionment and the manner of colonial disengagement in each reference country. The three countries selected for examination, as noted earlier, are all former British colonies. The focus of our reexamination will, therefore, be on the nature of British colonial heritage as it concerns the circumstances of independent leadership in each country.

Britain was ill prepared for the Independence of her colonies. Most of the agitations for self-government occurred within just a few years from one country to the other. The reason for this was simply that African nationalist leaders were exposed to the same indoctrinating experiences and influences, especially the liberating sensations of World War II and Marxist revolutionary tutelage, at about the same time. Another reason for disengagement was that after the fortunes that went into executing World War II, the economic prowess of Great Britain suffered untold setback so the cost implication of administering the colonies had to be reviewed. As John Macleod points out: "The British Empire was becoming increasingly expensive to administer, and it made economic sense to hand over the costly administration of colonial affairs to its people, whether or not the colonized peoples were prepared (economically or otherwise) for the shift of power" (10). There were hardly any well-articulated structural schemes for succession. In fact the British did not consider her colonies, at that time,

mature for political independence. Arthur Jones' deposition in this regard is quite revealing,

Mr. J.H. Huizinga, in a recent lecture to the Royal African Society, complained that the ripeness for self-government which should be the criterion for the attainment of political independence seemed to be given little consideration in actual practice, and he pointed out the extraordinary and dangerous absence of any co-ordination in the principles, policies, and aims of the various European rulers and the tempo at which they are pursued. As a result, he sees Africa as the continent of tomorrow's troubles (177).

This statement was made before even Egypt, the first country among the selected three to gain political freedom, became independent. So from the onset there was a feeling on the part of Britain that the quest for independence was untimely. Any supposition that British political extrication was regular is, therefore, a non-sequitur. Britain launched the withdrawal of effective occupation from her colonies with full awareness of the inevitable dire consequences of her action on the political wellbeing of the emerging nations.

But how is the colonial authority to blame if as a result of the hasty nature of departure, it could not articulate a proper plan for the indigenous people to take over? The fact is that the absence of one plan does not necessarily preclude the presence of another. Denis Judd rightly insists that "No one can doubt that the desire for profitable trade, plunder and enrichment was the primary force that led to the establishment of the imperial structure" (3). At the time of imperial disengagement, Britain had not had enough of Africa. So in response to what she perceived as impulsive agitations for self-actualization by her restive colonies, Britain devised a punitive and malicious plan for imperial hand-over, which would jeopardize her economic interests as little as possible. The plan was simply to foist epileptic leadership on erstwhile colonies for the purpose of perpetuating

imperial dominance on the newly independent nations to feed the bruised ego and pockets of the crown. To achieve this, the colonialists devised a two-pronged assault strategy. One was to favour minority or less advantaged ethnic groups with power, to create sectarian and ethnic tensions that would make the nations unstable and, therefore, weak and porous, easy prey for imperial penetration and patronage.

The situation is put in perspective in the following extract from the *encyclopaedia.jrank.org*:

The British ... tended to choose a preferred ethnic group over all the others in the countries that they colonized. These preferred groups, usually a conservative minority within the country, were supported to the extent that they worked against the interests of their fellow Africans. [They]... preferred ethnic societies with dictatorial and hierarchical systems like their own, and they recruited members of these ethnicities in disproportionate numbers into the colonial military. At independence, these soldiers often staged coups and removed the democratically elected civilian governments of their countries (np).

In this way the seeds of tribalism, which has become the bane of African development, was carefully sown and watered by colonial conspiracy. Tribal sentiments run deep and are not easy to efface because connected to the notion of difference is the exacerbation of unnecessary rivalry and mutual suspicion. The seriousness of this is indicated in Walter Rodney's assertion that,

One of the most important manifestations of historical arrest and stagnation in colonial Africa is that which commonly goes under the title of 'tribalism'. That term, in its common journalistic setting, is understood to mean that Africans have a basic loyalty to tribe rather than nation and that each tribe still retains a fundamental hostility towards its neighbouring tribes (275-6).

The reality of the tribal question and the extent to which it has been a sticky point to meaningful African development is not at the core of our present

discussion. But it is important as one of the strategies employed by the departing colonialists to keep their former colonies in bondage. And the fruits of tribalism are a major catalyst of disillusionment in African nations. The other part of the strategy was to seek and install in positions of power, gullible, unsavory, and nefarious characters armed with constitutions with sufficient loopholes to encourage corruption and irresponsible administration. In his preface to Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*, Jean Paul Sartre calls these indoctrinated elites "walking lies" fully doctored by the metropolis and sent home to sustain the imperial agenda of the empire under a new political label (Xliii). These chosen ones were usually formally trained in British institutions or were simply well positioned either geographically or economically to serve the whims and caprices of the colonialist. But the British did not maintain any of them as permanent friend. They were retained as long as they remained in the good books of the crown; and quickly replaced if they as much as considered themselves powerful enough to challenge Her Majesty's orders or endanger her interests. These favoured leaders were expected to remain docile. Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, a major force in post-colonial literature and criticism, points out that "... any act in the context of conquest and domination- is both a practice of power, intended to pacify a populace, and a symbolic act, a performance of power intended to produce docile minds" (4).

In Uganda, the corrupt and high-handed Milton Obote used the paraphernalia of power to suspend the constitution, terrorize his political opponents and loot the country. When the British, who aided his rise to power, considered him uncontrollable they sponsored Idi Amin to oust him in a putsch thereby inflicting, albeit unwittingly, an even more corrupt and repressive ruler upon the helpless country to continue the pillage. In Nigeria, the Fulani were favoured above every other tribe and enabled to power

thereby planting the seeds of mutual ethnic suspicion and conflicts that have debilitated the development of the country from independence to the present. In Egypt the uncompromising Muhammad Naguib was eased out, with the obvious midwifery of Britain, for the “more amenable” Gamal Abdel Nasser. And the undemocratic activities initiated from that time have become traditional in Egypt till date. Thus, in matters of succession, political considerations were sublimated for economic ones, which were actually the original and principal interests of Britain (and other colonialists) in the first place.

Nowhere in the selected plays is the apparent systematic complicity of the colonial authorities in the entire factors contributing to post-colonial disillusionment mentioned or even remotely alluded to. This curious omission, and the tendency of the authors to lay every fault at the doors of failed African leaders, could actually be said to be an inverse glorification of the colonial alternative, even if it is unintended.

The conclusion of this paper is that modern African writers should connect the post-colonial experiences of African countries to their colonial history. Post-colonial writing requires a confrontation with the basis of relationships between erstwhile colonies and their colonizers. It is necessarily a challenge to the dominant culture and the thread of this dominance does not hang in the air. It is critically connected to the fundamental establishment of power structures and relationships. Every society contains a dominant group that defines its hegemony, which all other groups in that society consciously or unconsciously conform to. And this dominant hegemony, more or less, reflects the identity of the overall society. It is, therefore, essential that this dominant group be carefully constituted and regularly scrutinized. Ignorance or neglect of this fact in a literary representation concerned with the welfare of society or the portrayal of its historical reality leads to a

pedestrian articulation of factors or at best an ineffectual treatment of subject matter that hangs on its head. Post-colonial disillusionment cannot be dislocated from imperial delusion because the former is merely an extension of the latter.

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