MODERNISM AS A FAILED UTOPIA: A POSTCOLONIAL CRITIQUE OF WOLE SOYINKA'S *DEATH AND THE KING'S HORSEMAN* AND NGUGI WA THIONG'O AND NGUGI WA MIRII'S, *I WILL MARRY WHEN I WANT*

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ABSTRACT

Ever since becoming a hegemonic cultural project erected on the foundations of self-acclaimed Western cultural legitimizations or superiority, modernism has been fiercely criticized for failing in its civilizing mission in Africa and in the introduction of corruption. African literature, especially its modern dramatic expressions, internalizes many examples and instances of the failure of the modernist project, with the ascendancy of poverty and/or deprivation, and the cultural and spatial domination of Africa and Africans. Of the lot, Wole Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman* and Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Ngugi wa Mirii's *I Will Marry When I Want* have been selected as thesis plays that provide explications on the status of modernism as a failed utopia. Our study relies on in-depth textual analysis pinioned on the cultural theory of Postcolonialism.

INTRODUCTION

This essay presents a critique of modernism as a general historical category or as an 'epochal' revolutionary consciousness that is predicated upon a new self-grounding in history (which includes the familiar issues of social and political self-determination, the possibility of genuine, rational enlightenment and the appeal of romantic expressivism). The essay also radiates the African contact with modernism, presaged as a much progressive and different sort of revolution and *eschaton* (from eschatology – meaning last things) by its European heralds but experienced by Africans as a calculated invasion and decimation of the African life-culture, tradition and economy; and the creation of a new society encrusted with what Samir Amin calls "new structures", that is, "ties based on class, or on groups defined by their position in the capitalist system" (277).

Our study explores the important connections between modernism and colonialism as fundamentally continuous and parallel cultural projects that now leaven every digit of our subjectivity and identity. Since their purviews (that is, of modernism and colonialism) became co-terminus with the economic methodology of class formation in Africa, both projects (that is, modernism and colonialism) provide cultural templates for making a distinction between the lower social orders from the middle and upper classes. In essence, our study proceeds equally as a critique of colonialism and those of its styles, idioms and identities. Therefore our conviction and contention in this essay does reflect that colonialism and modernity are deeply and inextricably linked.

An important question is: How has drama in Africa responded to the emergent ethos and problematics of modernism? How has modern African drama portrayed the disjunctions in African society arising from the epochal continuity (or should we say discontinuity) of modernism or the continuity of colonialism? Our answers are embedded in a study of Wole Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman and* Ngugi wa Thiongo and Ngugi wa Mirii's *I Will Marry When I Want.* The nucleate vision of our essay is to delineate the dissatisfactions arising from European high culture known simplistically as 'modernism', using the ideological texturing of *Postcolonialism*.

Postcolonialism: Intersecting with the antecedent exhalations of several polemical discourses such as Negritude, Pan Africanism, and Cultural Nationalism; a general leftist reorientation to the 'Third World' struggles; and the troublesome ideological category of 'Commonwealth Literature', postcolonialism has been rightly described by Helen Gilbert and Joanne Tompkins as "an engagement with and a contestation of colonialism's discourses, power structure and social hierarchies" (2). According to an analysis by Alan Lawson, postcolonialism is "a politically motivated historical-analytical movement (which) engages with, resists, and seeks to dismantle the effects of colonialism in the material, historical, cultural, political, pedagogical, discursive, and sexual domains"(156).

It is evident from the foregoing that the cultural and political tasks of postcolonial criticism function dually and paradoxically "to end all foreign domination of African culture, to systematically destroy all encrustations of colonial and slave mentality; and stake out new

foundations for a liberated African modernity"(Chinweizu, *et al*, 1). It entails what Ngugi calls a battle to "decolonize the mind"*(Decolonising the Mind*, 14). Yet a postcolonial project is not all about "deconstructing and displacing the Eurocentric premises of a discursive apparatus which constructed the *'Third World' "* (Benita Parry, 104). Rather, it also permits of what Homi Bhabba calls "an encounter with newness that is not part of the continuum of past and present. It creates a sense of the new as an insurgent act of cultural translation"(7). Says Helen Tiffin, "Decolonization is process, not arrival" (17).

Our nominated texts, Wole Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman* and Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Ngugi wa Mirii's *I Will Marry When I Want* exhibit an ideological disposition and features easily ascribed to postcolonial texts by Gilbert and Tompkins, namely:

- Acts that respond to the experience of imperialism, whether directly or indirectly;
- Acts performed for the continuation and/or regeneration of the colonized (and sometimes pre-contact communities);
- Acts performed with the awareness of, and sometimes, the incorporation of post-contact forms;
- Acts that interrogate the hegemony that underlies imperial representation (11).

These two texts also internalize acts which refute what Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin call "the privileged position of a standard code in the language and any monocentric view of human experiences (41).

Our texts, equally, utilize a method of interruption described by Tiffin(22) as "Canonical Counter-discourse". According to Tiffin:

> Counter-discourse is a process whereby the postcolonial writer unveils and dismantles the basic assumptions of a specific canonical text by developing a 'counter-text' (…) altering, often allegorically, its structures of power (…). Counter-discourse seeks to deconstruct significations of authority and power exercised in the canonical text, to release its stranglehold on representation and, by implication, to intervene in social conditioning (22).

A corollary of 'Counter-discourse' is Shannon Bell's idea of "Reverse-Discourse". Bell defines 'Reverse-discourse' as "the discourse of the subjugated subject of the hegemonic discourse" (14). Bell states that in 'Reverse discourse', "the meaning and power of the dominant (subject and) discourse is challenged (…), it also responds to challenges and transgressions of these" (14).

Epochal/Historical Connections of Modernism and Colonialism in Africa

Modernity can be easily perceived as most critically a rejection of antiquity. The end-in-view (or *telos*) of human life was presented by the ancients and many classical authors as the peaceful contemplation of the cosmos, and the place of human beings within such a cosmos. This was understood, if accepted, as a desirable objective though its realization as a way of life was greatly doubted. It was equally thought that there was no art or science that could serve effectively as a channel for the realization of such lofty objectives. Arising from our inescapable finitude and a limited proclivity for the rational and the commonsensical, the occurrence of such a life of pure contemplation was deemed wholly as a matter of chance.

Modernism provided a radical departure from a world view that canvases the possibility within human beings to regulate and evaluate their beliefs by rational self-reflection; free themselves from interest, passion, tradition, prejudice and autonomously "rule" their own thoughts; and determine their actions as a result of self-reflection and rational evaluation, an evaluation the conclusion of which ought to bind any rational agent. Robert Pippin proves that: "Modernity, as the name suggests, implies a decisive break in an intellectual tradition, an inability to rely on assumptions and practices taken for granted in the past" (10 – 11). Pippin submits that 'such a break" was preponderant with "the determinate insufficiencies of pre-modern institutions" (11). Such a view of pre-modern thought (as dogmatic, insufficiently self-conscious, unable to explain or account for its own possibility) provided the earliest attempt to make modernity Hegel's idealism. Modernism was promoted as "the achievement of full self-consciousness" (Pippin, 11).

Modernism was introduced into Africa at the turn of the twentieth century with the emergence of colonialism, and the consequent integration of micro economies of distinctive

African communities to the economic imperatives of global capitalism and imperialism emerging from the uterus of European metropolis. Before the imposition of formal colonialism in the late 19th century there was a long history of interaction between Europe and Africa described by David Kerr as "the informal or mercantilist phase of imperialism" (16). While relationship, during this phase, was based on the exchange of commodities and the relative equality of cultural contact, the increasing dominance of European trading companies and concessions created in the European minds a deteriorating image of indigenous African culture. Together with the noxious incidence of the slave trade, Europeans fostered the myth of African cultural inferiority. A predictable European temperament, nurtured mostly by European observers towards Africa, was to treat her "either as a *tabular rasa* without any tradition or as a source of primitive, atavistically obscene rituals which indicated its inferiority to the supposed rationalism of European culture" (Kerr, 18).

Armed with Count Gobineau's vociferations that in the Negro is "the absence of any intellectual aptitude", and Lucien Levy – Bruhl's distinctions "between the 'logical' mentality of 'civilized' societies and the 'prelogical' mentality of 'primitive' societies" (Wauthier, 258, 259), it was instinctual for European technocrats, educators, and bureaucrat-professionals to draft the perimeters of the new society they were building in Africa with the tenets of European modernism as the foregrounding premise of colonialism. It is in view of the above that Jeyifo (608) describes colonialism as "the all-encompassing cultural project of modernity, in Europe and outside Europe." Jeyifo asserts that "in Europe, this project goes by the name of the 'civilizing process'; outside Europe it generally went by the name… of 'the civilizing mission' (608).

The Modernist Utopia

These can be gleaned from the credo and speculations of modernism itemized by Pippin, namely;

> The emergence of the 'nation state' … more and more ambitious claims for the supreme authority of 'reason" in human affairs, contra the claims of tradition, the ancestors, and, especially, the church(the public status of reason, it was hoped, could provide the social integration and cultural stability long a function of tradition and religion); claims for the authority of natural science (modeled

> basically on mathematical physics) in the investigation of nature (including human nature); the corresponding 'demystification' of life, especially natural phenomena; an insistence on the natural rights of all individuals, above all else the right to freedom, the maximum expression of an individual's self-determination; the domination of social life by a free market economy, with its attendant phenomena of wage labour, urbanization, and the private ownership of the means of production; a belief in, if not the perfectibility, then at least the improvability of mankind, and a commitment (at least within the 'official culture') to a variety of virtues that originate in Christian humanism: tolerance, sympathy, prudence, charity, and so on. In the aesthetic domain, modern forms of artistic expression eventually came to be understood as not bound to the imitation of classical models, to be distinct, and even…to be superior to such models. Above all else, modernity is characterized by the view that human life after the political and intellectual revolutions of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is fundamentally better than before, and most likely will, thanks to such revolutions, be better still(4).

Our lengthy quotations containerize the kernel of Utopia or fantasia and the promise of a decent, free, new world for Africa replete with technological self-assertion that far surpasses the claims of customs, traditions and religion. Modernity (or the adoption of it) would give to Africa "nation-states" such as are found in Europe and North America, instead of the obfuscated notion of kingdoms and empires based on the proliferation of local fealties and dependencies. It would bestow the knowledge of fundamental human rights, private entrepreneurship, urbanization or the growth of cities and even "the maximum expression of an individual's self- determination. "Reason" and "Science" were the twin deities that would create a "new" world in Africa. This meant and, equally, required intellectual cultivations derivable from both literacy and liberal education founded on Western gnosis.

The new society in African would enter a fresh epoch dominated by the middle class, with its private property, market economy, and liberal democratic institutions such as law courts, banks, the civil service, the police and the armed forces, schools, colleges and universities, the prison, the legislatures, electoral commissions, sports and tourism boards, wage labour and

industrial unions, etc. The emergent society would flourish through egalitarian principles and those of the rule of law. Ends to be achieved through the entrenchment of knowledge included; good healthcare, pleasure, freedom from pain, a harvest of unquantifiable social benefits yielding from an unhindered pursuit of scientific knowledge; the eradication of scarcity which breeds human injustice, and the attainment of a generally progressive and politically enlightened sphere of human history. The 'modernist' consciousness proceeded from a Cartesian rhetoric that we should "master nature" and 'enjoy the fruits of the earth without toil" (Pippin, 5).

A Critical Assessment of the Modernist Utopia in Africa

The modernist postulates (*see Pippin[4] above*) contained in the colonial manifesto, with its insistence on the forced (or forceful) annexation of territories and the subjugation of ethnic constellations, exemplify Bell's 'hegemonic discourse'(14). A hegemonic discourse, according to Chris Tiffin and Alan Lawson (6) "appropriates, distorts, erases, but it also contains", especially in colonial context, cultures and subjects in order to control them. The colonizers never realized that no colony was as simply circumscribed as colonial discourse would have the world believe. As Gilbert and Tompkins do note: "each postcolonial political, historical, linguistic, and cultural situation inevitably becomes much more convoluted than is figured by the colonizer" (5). In Africa, anti-colonial protestations erupted and nationalist movements demanded for independence. Protests were based on the principles of the equality of races, and the right of all peoples for self-determination- themselves key tenets of modernism. Its imposition of what Kaarsholm Preben (33) calls "cultural hegemony" with its "colonial system of legitimization", and alien worldviews equally discoloured the Christian humanist ideology propagated by the colonizers.

In spite of its modest achievements, the colonial experiment, especially in Africa, has been stridently condemned, on most counts, for abounding more in rapaciousness than in the actual task of civilizing and transforming Africa. According to Aime Cesaire, "colonialism was propagated by Europe at a time when it had fallen into the hands of the most unscrupulous financiers and captains of industry" (23). His view underscores the co-existence of an "imperialist" concretion, with its economic and political processes furbished for the sole purpose of extending control over the African space; and capitalist institutions which, inevitably, produced

African dependence and underdevelopment. A prickly critique by D. K. Fieldhouse impresses that:

> Only a dogmatist would attempt to state categorically that colonialism was either totally inconsistent with economic development in the dependencies or, alternatively, that it was the best possible medium for stimulating their growth. Colonialism was not sufficiently consistent over time to justify any such sweeping assertions, nor was its objectives sufficiently coherent to achieve any particular result (103).

Fieldhouse portrays colonialism as some kind of historical accident with "a largely unplanned and, as it turned out, transient phase in the evolving relationship between more or less developed parts of the world" (49) J. A. Hobson unmasks the *raison detre* for the scramble for Africa as capitalism, and a capitalist search for higher profits from colonial conquests (54). In the analysis of Schaumpeter (5) both colonialism and imperialism operated without obeying any objective logic, having "non-rational and irrational, purely instinctual inclinations toward war and conquest" with "objectless tendencies toward forcible expansion, without definite, utilitarian limits". These were to breed sufficient structural distortions in the colonies before and after independence. V. Y. Mudimbe admits that 'the colonists (those settling a region), as well as the colonialists (those exploiting a territory by dominating a local majority) have all tended to organize and transform non-European areas into fundamentally European constructs" (1).

It is evident that Africa's contemporary socio-political, economic and cultural configurations are deeply entrenched in the reproduction of European models of society and civilization, and the creation of what Amilcar Cabral describes as "Westernized subjects… who would be replicas of the ideal 'modern' bourgeois subjects" (Jeyifo, 610). Africa also inherited a culture of racism, repression, autocracy which deeply marked colonial rule and hegemony as officialized or endorsed. Equally, templates for development initiatives including health and education are tempered to agree with those emanating from Europe and North America.

It is in a critique of this uncritical ingestion of imperialist or neo-imperialist parameters and contrivances in furbishing the new African citizens and societies that Norbert Elias describes modernity's civilizing process as "a comprehensive project which pervades every facet of subjectivity and identity, from the minutest details of daily life and bodily experience such as the

management of bodily effusions and the evacuation of waste, to large-scale macro-political processes like the formation of states and the monopolization of power. What this gigantic project ultimately entailed is the formation of a certain type of personality which would be the ideal, prototypical "civilized" modern subject (Jeyifo, 608-9).

African Drama and the Modernist Utopia

Following Shiva Naipul's insistence that, "No literature is free-floating. Its vitality springs, initially, from its rootedness in a specific type of world" (122), an important question to ask is: How has theatre participated or responded to the crises and vicissitudes of these emergent 'modern' African societies? Deriving its objective existence and identity from the disavowing and recusant stances of anti-colonial negators, and changes in the global political estimation of imperialism, theatre performances and dramatic literature in Africa implicated themselves in the agenda to castigate or denigrate the claims and plaudits of colonialism and its versions of modernism. According to Omafume Onoge, "the general thrust of the new petty-bourgeois African literature has been anti-imperialist because African writers saw their motivation in anti-colonial political terms" (465).

Bernth Lindfors, equally, affirms that; "the new literatures in English and French that have emerged in black Africa in the twentieth century have been profoundly influenced by politics" (135). A writer like Ngugi was to vociferate that "a writer responds, with his total personality, to a social environment which changes all the time…for the writer himself lives in, and is shaped by history "(*Homecoming, 47*). The dynamic impulse of the new African theater and its geography of concerns are depicted by Soyinka as consisting of movement "from mystical evocations from the supernatural world to anti-colonial writing denunciations of social introspection" (*'The African Theatre',12*). These are reflected in dramatic writings from West, East, South and North Africa. But our discourse shall derive from an analysis of our already nominated play texts.

Wole Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman*

Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman* strips bare the hubris and pretence stalking the conduct of the so-called 'civilizing mission'. Britain is prosecuting a large scale war (presumably World War ii) in Europe, yet he brings a warship to Lagos, Nigeria, a colony of Britain where Jane, Mr. Pilkings' wife confesses, "the war here… is all rather remote." Sometimes "the rare convoy of

fighter jets passes through on its way somewhere or on manoeuvres"; and recently there was a "ship that was blown up in the harbour' (*Death*: 52). It would be guessed that these measures were taken in order to intimidate the simple and unsophisticated colonists (that is, the "natives" who live in the colonies) with the superior might of white technology, and to secure their unquestioning obedience.

Much of the time, electronic propaganda machinery was used. David Kerr has noted how Britain, during the opening of hostilities in the Second World War, used radio, TV and film in the colonies "to explain British war policy to the colonial audience…. The purpose was to use film as a propaganda weapon to win the hearts and minds of African civilian population" (28).We learn from what Olunde tells Jane that many of these reports were false:

> In your newsreels I heard defeats, thorough, murderous defeats described as strategic victories…. Don't forget I was attached to hospitals all the time. Hordes of your wounded passed through those wards. I spoke to them…. They spoke terrible truths of the realities of that war" (*Death*, 55).

Olunde's assertions approximate what Gilbert and Tompkins call 'Historical Recuperation' which is one of the dominant preoccupations of postcolonial plays. This involves 'telling' "the other side of the conquering whites' story in order to contest the official version" (12). Olunde's assertions also exemplify a subterranean 'counter-discourse'.

We also gather from the conversation between Jane and Olunde that the British warship contained chemical weapons that can exterminate whole populations. For this "the captain blew himself up with it deliberately…." (*Death*, 52). To Jane, "there was no other way to save lives. No time to devise anything else. The captain took the decision and carried it out" (*Death*, 52). Yet, it is ironic to learn that Jane's husband would stop Elesin from committing suicide or self-sacrifice by instructing Amusa "to arrest the man and lock him up" (*Death*, 33). Says Pilkings to the Resident: "some strange custom they have sir. It seems because the king is dead, some important chief has to commit suicide" (*Death*, 47). In Jane's assessment: "However clearly you try to put it, it is still a barbaric custom…it is feudal (*Death*, 54). The condemnation of long-standing African (Yoruba) cultural practices by the Pilkingses appropriately conveys what Gayatri Spivak demonstrates as "the epistemic violence of imperialism, its attack on other culture's ways of

knowing and representing themselves" (243-61). An important instrument of interruption and resistance against white colonial self-perpetration is the use of language, especially the pidgin English, and other extra-verbal language such as drumbeats. They are deployed, particularly, to disturb or blur the white man's psyche.

For instance, the white man has brought to Nigeria (Africa) his "hand-cranked gramophone" with which he plays a tango (*Death*, 23). Morever, the European club houses what Soyinka calls "a portion of the local police brass band with its white conductor" (*Death*, 45); and reputed for an "orchestra waltz rendition (which) is not of the highest musical standard" (*Death*, 46). Yet the Pilkingses feel psychologically disturbed by African drums. In the words of Pilkings: "I am getting rattled…. Probably the effect of those bloody drums. Do you hear how they go on and on" (*Death*, 27). As the drumming persists, "Jane gets up suddenly, restless" (*Death*, 30). Whereas Jane "thought all bush drumming sounded the same" (*Death*, 27), it would take Joseph, their domestic servant to interpret the language of the native drums to them.

Equally, the White man has brought his clock and wrist watches as superior artifacts of European technology for reckoning time. But Jane uses the same to disparage one of Africa's ways of knowing using nature, in this case, using the moon to tell the time. When "the clock in the residency begins to chime" and Pilkings "looks at his watch then turns, horror-stricken, to stare at his wife", to announce that: "it is midnight…. I had no idea it was that late"; Jane's retort is: "But surely…they don't count the hours the way we do. The moon or something…. (*Death*, 50).

A missing nugget in European civilizing mission was the humility of acknowledging in many instances, by the whites, that there were equally superior items and practices of culture in Africa as could be found among Europeans. Olunde's assessment of morbid Eurocentrism of the colonialist contains the cyst of this self-centeredness when he tells Jane that: "You believe that everything which appears to make sense was learnt from you" (*Death*, 54).

A key incident is that involving the *egungun*, a variant of Yoruba ancestral masquerades. They are arrested by Sergeant Amusa for, purportedly, stirring a riot in town. While Amusa "treats Egungun with respect" (*Death*, 25) because he understands them to be the corporeal version of departed ancestors, Mr. Pilkings strips the *egungun* masquerades of their paraphernalia as mere "juju' (*Death*, 25). On confiscating the *egungun* costumes, the Pilkingses adopt them as costumes

for an English "ball." The stage direction indicates that even the prince of England "is quite fascinated by their costume and they demonstrate the adaptations they have made to it….They demonstrate the dance steps and the guttural sounds made by the *Egungun*…. Everyone is highly entertained, the Royal Party especially who lead the applause (*Death*, 46).

Thus, for the white colonialists, while acknowledging the intrinsic beauty of many African cultures, they would be driven by the audacity of the imperial might and the so-called 'superiority complex" to disparage these cultures because they did not emanate from Europe. This is the crux of eurocentrism, that is, the insistence on western cultural authority and the epistemes that underlie it. That cultural authority and superiority are maintained or legitimated by constructing "other" cultures which they deem as inferior. The inferior then stands as a mirror by which the west can assuredly and unmistakably construct its superiority. That is, through a subtle operation of binaries such as "we and them", "the colonizer and the colonized," "black and white". Samir Amin notes that, as a culturalist phenomenon, "eurocentrism…claims that imitation of the Western model by all people is the only solution to the challenge of our time" (*Eurocentrism*,3). This is the mind-set that pre-occupies Mary Kingsley's assertion that: "The African has never made an even fourteenth-rate piece of cloth or pottery" (669).

Since the exclusive agenda of modernism consisted in the destruction of the culture of the "natives' and the forceful insemination of those of the whites, it could be resonated, again, like Olunde's comments to Jane, that: "I discovered that you have no respect for what you do not understand" (*Death*, 51). Thus, at the cultural and religious levels, especially through the instrumentality of schools, churches, press, and audio-visual media, the civilizing colonial missions diffused new attitudes which were contradictory and richly complex models (when assessed critically) especially in the context of culture, spiritual values, and their transmission.

Instead of unifying the peoples and culture of Africa, colonialism both lacerated and shredded the culturally unified and religiously integrated grids of most African traditions. It is evident from the text that colonial culture provided the plank for trivializing the whole traditional mode of life and its spiritual framework. This new culture also provided reasons for the undermining of "un-Europeanised" or ambivalent individuals. These "unconverted" or "confused" Africans constituted an emergent intermediate space described as "marginality" by Samin Amir.

Says he: "Marginality designates the intermediate space between the so-called African tradition and the projected modernity of colonialism" (*Accumulation*, 5).

Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Ngugi wa Mirii's *I Will Marry When I Want*

I Will Marry When I Want by Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Ngugi wa Mirii is a text on how this marginality is constituted or even produced. While, consciously, navigating larger territories of proletarian concerns, this peasant play unfurls the processes through which the "natives" (so-called) in Africa conceded large portions of the most important factor of their agrarian economy, land, to the reprehensible logic of development canvassed by neo-imperialists and their educated African allies. A peasant farm worker by the name kigunda has one and a half acre of land, possibly an ancestral inheritance. Through acts of superior cajolery, Ahab Kioi, a local director in a foreign firm in which Kiguunda works, persuades kiguunda to obtain a loan from a commercial bank to do a church wedding.

On Kiguunda's failure to pay back the loan, and its high interest rate, his one and a half acre of land is seized by the bank and put out for public auction. He learns, at that moment, that Ahab Kioi is the chairman of the Board of Directors of the bank, and that he is equally the one who is to buy his (Kiguunda's land). This is the same land of which Kiguunda has already reported to Wangeci, his wife, that Ahab Kioi wants to buy from him for "a company belonging to some foreigners from America, Germany, and from… Japan which (manufacture) insecticides for killing bed bugs" (*I Will Marry*, 23 – 24). Kiguunda's auctioned land is used to build the so-called company that manufactures insecticides, under the directorship of John Ikuua. Soon, Ahab Kioi's son, John Muhuuni impregnates Gathoni, Kigunnda's daughter, and denies his culpability. It is not long before Ahab Kioi is retrenched from the employ of the company where he works.

By loosing his land to international middle men, Ahab kioi and Ikuua, Kiguunda's family is eliminated from all forms of socio-economic relevance. They are, inadvertently, drafted or conscripted into the swelling ranks of urban marginals now festering the urban areas of many independent African countries. The description of his house and income in the text speaks for it.

> Kiguunda's home. A square, mud-walled hut, the white ochre is fading. In one corner could be seen Kiguunda and Wangeci's bed. In another can be seen a pile of rags on the floor. The floor is Gathoni's bed and the rags her bedding. Although poorly

> dressed, Gathoni is very beautiful. On one of the walls there hangs a framed title deed for one and a half acre of land…. On one side of the wall there hangs kiguunda's coat, and on the opposite side, on the same wall, Wangeci's coat. The coats are torn and patched (*I Will Marry,* 2).

We learn later from Wangeci that Kiguunda's income can only procure "thirty cents of cooking oil and half a kilo of sugar" (*I Will Marry*, 14). It is scarcely adequate for the purchase of salt (*I Will Marry*, 14) and 'tea leaves" (*I Will Marry*, 17). There is no land left any more for Kiguunda and his children both for habitation and cultivation.

Ineluctably, there is a catalogue of complaints against emergent socio-political and economic architectonics of the post-indepent Kenyan (African) society. These remonstrations reflect the failed utopia or expectations of the good life that was to follow the invention of modernity. Gicaamba, a character in the play notes that:

> Today, all the good schools belong to the children of the rich, big shops, big farms, coffee plantation, tea plantation, wheat fields and ranches, all belong to the rich, all the tarmac roads lead to the house of the rich. Good hospitals belong to them, so that when they get heart attacks and belly ulcers, their wives can rush them to the hospitals in Mercedes Benzes. The Rich! The Rich!! And we the poor have only dispensaries at Tigoni and Kiambu. Some times these dispensaries have no drugs, sometimes people die on the way or in the queue that lasts from dawn to dusk (*I Will Marry*, 58).

Apart from the lopsided distribution of infrastructures, several other institutions of liberal democracy are organized to the disadvantage of the poor. Many instances in the play demonstrate this. One of such is when Kiguunda and Wangeci threaten to take the Kioi's family to the law court for their son's impregnating of Gathoni. Ahab Kioi's reply is: "Did you say court of law? Run. Hurry up. We shall see on whose side the law is! Your side or our side!. (*I Will Marry*, 79).

Another instance is when Kiguunda takes a loan from a bank which Ahab Kioi serves as the local Director. The loan is taken to execute a Christian marriage on the advise of Ahab Kioi. Kiguunda uses his one and a half acre of land as collateral for the loan. On Kiguunda's failure to pay back the loan because of unreasonably high interest rates, both the land and the household

equipment he bought are confiscated. The land is auctioned out by the bank and it is purchased by Ahab kioi. The land would become a site for an insecticide company.

A different but related case is the lack of safety standards and proper rewards for workers. There is a report, by Gicaamba, of the death of a young man because "the chemical dust accumulated in his body until the head cracked! Was he given compensation? He was summarily dismissed"(*I Will Marry*, 27). He confesses that since being "employed in that factory twenty-one people in that section have died. Yes twenty-one people" (*I Will Marry*, 28). According to Gicaamba: "Wages can never really compensate for your labour…. We workers are like monkeys. When they want to steal our labour they bribe us with a handful of peanuts….. the owners of these companies are real scorpions. They know three things only: to oppress workers, to take away their rights, to suck their blood (*I Will Marry*, 26).

According to a submission by Wangeci: "African employers are not different from Indian employers or from the Boer White landlords….They don't know the phrase "increased wages" (*I Will Marry*, 15). According to an analysis of the economy of the 'Third World' nations by Fidel Castro, "for every eight dollars an international multinational holding invests in the Third World, it reaps grossly twenty-four dollars. Why? Wages stand at a certain distance from labour' (Kenner and Petras, 263). As several decades have passed since these assertions were made by Castro, it could be surmised, that, Western economies' profiteering on the Third World, (so-called), presently, would be triply high.

The people responsible for stultifying the post-independence expectations of good governance and transformation promised by modernity are the emergent national bourgeoisie and elites. According to Fanon,

> These are the people who stepped into the shoes of the former European settlers: doctors, barristers, traders, commercial merchants, travelers, general agents and transport agents. From now on, they insisted that foreign companies should pass through their hands whether these companies wished to keep their connection with the country or to open it up. The national middle class now discovers it historic mission, that of the intermediary (122).

In a survey of its role in Africa, Kwame Nkrumah does note, polemically, that:

> The bourgeoisie as a whole cannot be seen in isolation from imperialism and neo-colonialism. While representing only a small fraction of the population, it is nevertheless a great danger to the African masses because of the strength it derives from its dependence on foreign bourgeois capitalism which seeks to keep the peasants and workers of Africa in a condition of perpetual subjection (63).

As it is aptly remarked by Gicaamba (who also doubles as the voice of conscience in the play), "European Kioi, Asian Kioi, the African Kioi, what's the difference? They are clansmen, they know how to take from the poor" (I Will Marry, 90).We learn from Ikuua's flimsy self-adulation that: "Being a local director of foreign firms is not a very taxing job; what they want is just an African's name. All we are required to do is to be their watchmen" (I Will Marry, 59). Ngugi describes them as "the native ruling class and [the] international imperialist allies" (Writer in Politics, 26).

CONCLUSIONS

Therefore, judging from its own self-assessment by Ikuua in the last paragraph, the mission of the middle class in Africa has little to do with transforming their nations or polities. Its primary preoccupation is the overhauling of the tenuous links between their nations and a rampant capitalism that is mediated from Europe's finance capitals and those of North America. As heirs of socio-political, economic and cultural legacies of colonialism and the utopia of modernity (or promise of good things to come) they preponderated, African bourgeoisie operate with an absence of ambition and a meanness of outlook that belie their qualities described by Fanon as "dynamic pioneer aspect, the characteristic of the inventor and the discoverer of new worlds" (122).

Where colonialism had left a breach or fracture on the fabrics of African life and culture, the national bourgeoisie have completed its decimation. The African experience of modernity is akin to what prophet Joel says in one of his oracular discharges concerning the gradual and studied decimation of Judah by foreign, gentile powers: "What the locust swarm has left, the great locusts have eaten; what the great locusts have left, the young locusts have eaten; what the young

locusts have left other locusts have eaten" (Joel 1Vs 4; NIV). How this applies to Africa is that what the foreign imperialists left, the local bourgeoisie have confiscated for themselves.

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