

Worsening Inhospitability in Inherited Dystopias: Kenya and Somalia as Epitomes

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Abstract

Farah and Ngugi paint Somalia and Kenya as spaces where the incompetence of the new leaders, with the collusion of the colonial masters, has produced unpleasant effects on the lives of the masses. The two writers implicitly project that both civilian and military regimes are despicable Siamese twins in their political intercourse with the people. Using mimicry as a theoretical anchor, this paper aims to foreground the colonial strategies rehashed by the postcolonial leaders of Somalia and Kenya to sustain their political and economic supremacy over the governed. This paper concludes that the reviewed spaces remain inhospitable for those at the periphery of the power structure, particularly those who aspire to become economically independent. The paper equally concludes that for the indigent masses, the said spaces have become even worse dystopias of uncertainty – uncertain as to who will be the right autochthones to rekindle hope in them for a dignified existence.

Keywords: *necropolitics, liberticidal politics, economic violence, mimicry, inhospitable spaces, torture chamber.*

Introduction

Ngugi and Farah seek to demonstrate that where political vision spins around the sole interests of members of an inner circle bent on promoting inequalities, the tools of coercion privileged by the colonial master will remain fashionable. The texts chosen for this article (*Petals of Blood* and *Matigari* by Ngugi and *Sweet and Sour Milk*, *Sardines* and *Close Sesame* by Farah)¹ unveil a diabolic trinity used by the colonial replacements within the power structure to sustain their hegemony over the masses: torture of challenging dissenters, encouragement of intellectual sycophancy and complicity and thirdly, promotion of philistinism. This satanic creed re-historicises the strategies used by the erstwhile imperial administrators to sustain their political and economic supremacy over their colonised misérables.

¹ Henceforward, we shall use *Petals*, *Matigari*, *Sweet*, *Sardines* and *Sesame* instead of full titles.

The two writers seem to ask the following questions in the reviewed works: Are the dystopias inherited bequeathed to the Central and East African people any worse than the new ones created by the colonial replacements? Have the indigenous leaders who have replaced the colonial masters been able to make life comfortable for the victims of colonial abuse? Are the immediate leaders of post-independence Africa intellectually equipped for real independence? Are the post-independence leaders merely the final executors of the ruthless and exploitative policies of the replaced colonial regimes (Henning, 2008)? The answer is “no” to all these questions. And since the post-independence dystopias reviewed in this study are a mere iteration of pre-independence ones, one can adopt mimicry as the theoretical underpinning to foreground two major governance strategies employed the new-but-not-too-new stewards of the studied spaces in two slates: necropolitics and liberticidal politics.

Slate One: Necropolitics in Somalia

Somalia, under the political stewardship of Siad Barre, evidently Farah’s Generalissimo in *Sweet, Sardines* and *Sesame*, is considered as one of Africa’s worst dystopias. It can be argued that this trilogy intends to point an accusing finger at Siad Barre and the erstwhile colonial masters of the Somali space for the deepening and worsening of the dystopia left behind by the latter. Directly affected by the dictatorial behaviour of Siad Barre, Nuruddin Farah assumes the responsibility of presenting to the reading community this postcolonial dystopia, with all the inhuman manifestations of its leader (the Generalissimo) and his regime, as well as the active complicity of various western powers. With his pen, he succinctly depicts scenarios of crude terror and necropolitics which seem to justify his labelling of Somalia not just as a prison with an effective Dionysius Ear, but also as an unparalleled torture chamber for the express purpose of maintaining and sustaining a status quo where the political and economic hegemony of the oppressor is consolidated whilst the indigence of the oppressed sinks into a bottomless abyss.

In this component, we shall analyse the instances of necropolitics resorted to by the Generalissimo to muzzle dissent. We shall equally discuss the Generalissimo’s lack of respect for status in his practice of necropolitics: religious and intellectual dignitaries are, in fact, his main targets. He has no sacred cows in his dispensation of bad behaviour anchored on the credo that “destabilizers do so to their own sorrow”. This component shall equally discuss the Generalissimo’s reliance on Western powers, particularly Russia, to consolidate and sustain his

torture chamber, since his (the Generalissimo) unbridled megalomania seems to have rendered him oblivious and blind to the need to work with the religious and intellectual dignitaries to alleviate or even eradicate poverty in Somalia.

It can be posited that in the mimicking or re-historicising necropolitics and liberticidal politics in the East African hemisphere, Farah's Generalissimo (Siad Barre) is unarguably the most ruthless leader in the space under review. His way of dealing with people branded as dissenters or challengers of his regime knows no boundaries. He succeeds, with the aid of both local and international hirelings to stifle the liberty to challenge his regime. In conformity with the old colonial order where challengers of the word of the colonial master would be considered as destabilizers or subversives, and be dealt with accordingly, challengers of the Generalissimo's word are crushed like cats, to give a literal interpretation of Ionesco's "chats écrasés" in *Rhinocéros* (p. 94). Literally, no one is free to speak and act in a manner that corrodes the interests of the regime.

What the reader observes, and of course Farah makes no attempt to dissimulate this reality, is that, the entire Somalia space is a torture chamber and at the same time an incaceral dystopia where the Generalissimo is the General Warder. By instituting an all-hearing system through the metaphoric construction of Dionysius Ear, a trope that further confirms the Somalia space as a terrible penitentiary, the General succeeds in rendering himself omniscient, omnipresent and ultimately, omnipotent. In the Mogadiscio under review, it is practically impossible to do or utter, or attempt to do or utter anything subversive to the General's regime without his knowing about it, and on very good authority.

In trying to quell down the tense political atmosphere engendered by the *Dionysius Ear* (the name given by Soyaan and the nine others to their memoranda), the excessive ruthlessness of the Generalissimo and his henchmen is extended even to those who are mere privy to the existence of these memoranda. Such is the fate of Mulki, Soyaan's secretary/typist who typed the memoranda. She is not just arrested and tortured, but she is also completely withdrawn from circulation, as Farah paints the situation. In addition to this, the entire tribesmen and women of Mulki are imprisoned too. What is detected in this form of generalized torture is that, the Generalissimo and his hirelings are not seen to demonstrate any sense of moderation in their administration of the bitter pills of coercion to their primary, secondary and even tertiary victims. And once in the custody of these torturing rhinos, there is hardly anyway the victim will be able to brave their methods of torture and remain reticent. In Loyaan the reader detects a Farah who informs the general readership how the Generalissimo's victims are tortured. Loyaan makes this torture obvious, albeit metaphorically, by borrowing

from the regime's sadism to attempt to extract confession from the Minister to the Presidency. In so doing, Loyaan sees himself as "the powerful pervert who puts the needle between the flesh of the thumb and the nail, screws it in harder, deeper, further and further, until it draws blood, not innocent blood, but just blood, red blood." (*Sweet*, pp. 197-8)

The General and his henchmen are not just able to trace and disgrace their destabilizers, they are also able, through his infallible network of detectives, to lay hands on the Memoranda which Margaritta puts in her jewellery box at the bank for safe keeping. In respect thereof, Loyaan comments: "[t]he sky is too high to reach and hide [Soyaan's documents] in [and] the earth too earthly and too exposed and the boxes are not sufficiently secretive." (p. 248) What the breaking into Margaritta's jewellery box at the bank reveals is that, the right to one's privacy can only remain sacrosanct if it is not likely to threaten the Generalissimo's peace of mind. The incident further reveals the ambivalent nature of the Generalissimo's regime and probably of all post-colonial dictatorial regimes: Margaritta, the keeper of the memoranda, is not subjected to physical torture because she is of Italian extraction while Mulki, the machine writer of the document, is subjected to both physical and psychological tortures. Through the treatment of these two ladies, it can be deduced that the two-faced Somalian Janus god has the ugly face turned towards the native and the beautiful one towards the alien.

It is also observed that when the Janus Generalissimo wears an aura of clemency, the victim, whom he considers as a real nuisance and embarrassment to his regime, is made to suffer some psychological torture that would make the physical one a better option were he to be given the opportunity to choose. Loyaan is made to suffer the pangs of exile when he obstinately questions the people-in-power in order to know who and what killed his twin brother, Soyaaan. He is "deported" to communist Belgrade, far away from all sources of family and other vectors of social comfort. The use of the word "deport" brings to memory a string of cruel punishments in history meted out on the subversives by people-in-power. The word does remind the reader about the treatment meted out on the Jews by the Nazi when they were deported to Serbia or other inhospitable places to perish. The word also brings to memory the multitude of traditional potentates – Samoury Touré, Cheikh Amadou Bamba, Bai Bureh, etc. – who were exiled by the colonial regimes to faraway lands so that they would divide, rule, ruin and exploit conquered territories unperturbed. But above all, the word "deported" becomes an implicit proof that the Soviet Union and those countries which accepted their political tutelage are one and the same polity. But unlike the exile of some of these

traditional leaders, who were made to return home when they were already old, weak and depleted of organic ardour, Loyaan is abandoned to his moral resources and left to degenerate into a complete human waste in Belgrade.

In view of the above, it is probably helpful to argue that the politically asphyxiating atmosphere in Somalia is not just a mimicry or re-historicisation of the antics and inhumane conduct of the former colonial master, but, in fact, also the sum total of a perfectly negative hybrid of necropolitical practices demonstrated by communist regimes all over the world, as fictionalized in Ionesco's *Rhinoceros*, George Orwell's *Animal Farm* and *1984*, Arthur Koestler's *Darkness at Noon*, and even as documented in Jang Jing-Sung's *Dear Leader*, to mention just a few of such works.

Therefore, when the Generalissimo orders the elimination of the ten imams and all the ten intellectuals (Jibriil, Koschin, Mahad, Medina, Mukhtarr, Mursal, Samater, Ibrahim Siciliano and Soyaan) save Ahmed-Wellie, what surges forth from one's memory is not just the Tiananmen Square killings in China, Napoleon's purges in *Animal Farm*, but rather the brutal methods used by the colonial master to stymie dissent and consolidate exploitation of the natural resources of the colonized. Or, perhaps, the absurd sadomasochism of Caligula who would have loved to cut off all the necks of the Romans in one drop of the guillotine.

Again, it should also be borne in mind that the practice of necropolitics in the terms proposed by Mbembe, where bodies are territorialised into those who should die and those who should live so that the dictatorial regime will grow strong and prosperous, the dictators seem to believe that "bad behaviour is more often than not good politics" (Bueno de Mesquita et al., 2012, p. xi). The Generalissimo and his henchmen seem to be guided by this paradox evoked by Bueno et al in almost all his different engagements with his othered masses. One may also acknowledge that the Generalissimo's behaviour, emblematic of postcolonial military dictators, finds expression in Josaphat B. Kubayanda's evaluation of postcolonial dictatorship in Africa as a system that "concerns itself with repression which, in effect, means the arrest, exile, execution, or consistent harassment of dissident voices" (p. 5) and can therefore produce "an atmosphere of fear, hate and humiliation" (p. 5).

This atmosphere of fear born out of necropolitics is buttressed by Ebla in her caution to her daughter, Sagal, to pin her conscience to her underthings and not to wear it on her forehead (*Sardines*, p. 35) when she discovers that she is playing with the fire of politics:

The land is mined, and this General is out to kill. Duck at the buzz of the coming bullet; duck, my dearest, before a stray one gets you, duck and dodge. Do you argue that the city is full of walking corpses? (p. 35)

Ebla's piece of advice resonates with the wisdom contained in Duncan's ironic comment in *Macbeth*: "There's no art to find the mind's construction in the face" (Act 1, Scene 4). What this means is that, Sagal should dissimulate her participation in destabilising the Generalissimo if she wants to remain alive. It is important to note, however, that the two political situations are starkly different. While Duncan is not aware that he is being hunted, the Generalissimo is aware that he is living in a society of hunters and has therefore taken every precaution in order not to fall prey by not just transforming Somalia into an ordinary prison, but into a prison where everybody seems to be in death row. Ebla's fear can therefore be considered founded.

Given the hunting atmosphere depicted in Farah's trilogy, it seems reasonable to posit, as suggests Gene Sharp (1973), that it is ill-advised to use violence to undo the work of the Generalissimo. It has been impossible for the challengers to execute their Sharpian agenda of non-violent action and destroy the atmosphere of fear, hate and humiliation the Generalissimo has established in Somalia. While the nine Somali intellectuals can only be praised for their organic behaviour, it is observed that it is foolhardiness or suicidal to attempt to terminate the regime of a Generalissimo through the gun which some of them eventually resort to after the assassination of Soyaan. As the texts reveal, he is a frontline man for the Soviets and because of this position, he is given maximum security, but not without a price tag as Nasser narrates in his letter to Medina:

Politics in Africa and the third World (...) is but an insipid goulash of western and eastern ideologies. The Soviets mastermind the acculturation of the African and the Asian as much as the other foreign powers did before them. (...). As for the Soviets, they got what they deserved. They led their little boy by the hand and introduced him to their friends. They used him; they cleaned his coast of its fish; they had their base, etcetera, etcetera. He used them too. He made them train his clansmen; he used them to build himself a system of security, watertight as the KGB. (Sardines, p. 25)

The above seems to validate the argument that without the backing of some great powers, dictators in Africa will hardly succeed in establishing themselves as such. Nasser's excogitations point to the fact that the Generalissimo assumes the airs of another Louis XIV who also believes that "l'état c'est lui" because of the failsafe clarified security system the Russians have helped him entrench. The Generalissimo even arrogantly asserts this when Soyaan declares his decision to kill the ten imams as unconstitutional:

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... have I ever introduced myself to you, young man? I am the constitution. Now you know who I am, and I want you out of here before I set those dogs of mine on you and you are torn to pieces. Out! (Sweet, p. 251).

One queer form of necropolitics practiced by the Generalissimo's regime and deemed vital to add to the smorgasbord of necropolitical practices discussed above is the one related to the sly elimination of the poor by subjecting them to hunger. Antecedents in history tempt one to argue that the Generalissimo mimics the starve-and-rule strategy used in the past by regimes that want to put the oppressed masses under perfect control. Medina, in fact, believes that the Russians are not unaware of the imminent drought, but choose to wait for it to result to famine (*Sardines*, p. 117). Thus, she is comforted by the foregoing to see the strategy "as a continuation of the same barbaric methods as were used by the Americans when they caused famine in Southeast Asia" (p. 117). Farah continues to report that the famine in Somalia provides the Generalissimo with the opportunity to employ this strategy in a sustainable manner because of two important benefits he derives from it. First, the financial help rendered by international charity organisations for the famine helps him to pay his security forces (p. 116). Second, the famine helps him quieten down the rebellious populations of the north as is buttressed by Medina with the support of another antecedent:

[i]t is easier to negotiate from a position of power with a hungry country; it's easier to rule a starving family. Haile Selassie used hunger as a controlling force in the Ogaden, Wallo, Sidamo and other provinces. The strategy has remained the same: starve and rule. (p. 117)

Having presented the Somali political situation under the Generalissimo (Siad Barre) this way, it can be asserted that through necropolitics, the Generalissimo succeeds in reducing his people to walking corpses. He has astutely territorialized the Somali people into who should die so that he can sustain his dominance over them. Thus, Somalia is not just a politically asphyxiated space, but a torture chamber and prison where every Somali seems to be serving a death sentence. It has also been established that with the complicity and collusion of the Soviets in creating a Somali society of the living-dead, the resources of Somalia are made to benefit mainly the few in power and their external political godfathers.

Slate Two (a): Liberticidal Politics in Kenya

The East-African dystopia painted by Ngugi in *Petals* and *Matigari* may not be too inundated with incidents of serial killing and torture, or as despicable and inhospitable as Farah presents Mogadishu, but all the same, Ngugi presents it as an unbearable space for the victims of capitalism. It may not be Farah's open society

of hunters where the oppressed are in constant quest for the oppressor's life (hunting the hunter) and vice versa but it is all the same a physical and economic torture chamber that offers no hope and scope to the downtrodden. In much clearer terms, the Kenyan power apparatus will not just use raw arms and physical aggression to silence the people while they lead them to the slaughter house, they will also use powerful economic arms to ensure that the dreams entertained by enterprising Kenyans to attain a certain level of economic independence remain a nightmare.² Thus, this segment shall analyse the physical and economic forms of violence used by Kenyans in authority to tame the exploited masses.

In *Petals* and *Matigari* Ngugi lucidly demonstrates that the Kenyan space is both an economic and physical torture chamber for the poor, but particularly for those agents who grant themselves the audacity to overturn this state of affairs. In *Petals*, Nderi, Chui, Kimeria, Mzigo and Reverend Ezekiel Waweru have their own thugs whom they rely upon to muzzle dissent so that they can continue to steal the wealth of the poor people, in fulfilment of the Gospel according to Tijan Sallah, The Gambian poet:

*To those who have shall more be given.
But from those who have not, even what they have
Shall be taken away.* (1988, p. 13)

What appears to be the greatest evil, one can argue, is not so much the act of taking as the means employed to take (steal) and continue taking without hindrance. We contend that Nderi, Chui, Kimeria, Mzigo and Reverend Ezekiel Waweru, occupants of the first locus of extreme opulence, abuse or misinterpret the Gospel. And it is not impossible for the reader to brand these first locus occupants as antitheses of humankind for they (Nderi, Chui, Kimeria, Mzigo and Reverend Ezekiel Waweru) do not only stop at dispossessing the people of their lands hiding behind the bank, they go to the extremity of swindling the people by asking them to take from their very meagre resources and contribute twelve shillings and fifty cents per individual to the Kiama-kamwene Cultural Organization (KCO) which they believe, in an argument they do not expect any hard-thinking individual to patronize, will foster "unity between the rich and the poor and bring cultural harmony to all the regions" (*Petals*, p. 85). One should add that they are able to succeed in this robbery mission because they are protected by armed thugs.

² It can be assumed that Ngugi decided not to go deep into the theme of arbitrary killings by dictators in *Petals* because this has been sufficiently addressed in *Crow of the Wizard*.

The tea-drinking meeting organized by the KCO at Gatundu turns out chaotic and ends up widening the moat between rich and poor on account of a very disturbing display of ruthless behaviour by KCO thugs who hit a teacher with a flat panga (heavy cutlass) for having the temerity to ask loudly if the tea party was to have them fall into queues: one for men and the other for women (p. 92); and mercilessly beat up a scraggy wretched old man – belonging to the second locus of the used, misused and abused – for protesting against the taking of a new oath “until the promises of the first one have been fulfilled” (p. 93). According to Munira, the thugs “stepped on his neck and pressed it with their boots against the floor and only when he made animal noises did they stop. He took the oath all right. But not with his heart” (p. 93).

What seems even more disturbing is Reverend Ezekiel’s inability to commiserate with the poor old man on his maltreatment; what he rather does is to take sides with the KCO and defend it further as a useful organization. Ezekiel thus reminds the critic of Richard Congreve, Bishop of Oxford, who is believed to have said that “God has entrusted India to us to hold it for Him, and we have no right to give it up” (Bhaskar, 1967, p. 26). It is tempting to assume that Ezekiel too believes that Kenya has been entrusted to them by some divine power not only for them to feed on the downtrodden poor, but to also coerce them into subservience.

So, reminiscent of the house tax³ and various other forms of economic exploitations to which the indigenous people were subjected by the colonial administration without seeing any significant development, the Ilmorogans are made to go through a similar experience in terms, but starkly different in intent. That is to say, both experiences (colonial and post-independence) can be subsumed under the rubric of exploitation. But unlike the house tax, which only entailed milking dry cows, the Ilmorog development programme does not stop at milking the dry cows; it goes as far as working towards rendering the future of these dry cows uncertain. Like the colonial establishment, the post-independence Kenyan power structure continues the work of the empire builders commenced and supervised directly by them: dispossessing the people of their lands through the faceless African Economic Bank and the KCC.

The African Economic Bank entices people into accepting loans from it with “small interests” and of course with their lands as collateral security. It is tempting to assume that the African Economic Bank does not expect the indigent indigenes of Ilmorog to be able to pay back their loans particularly when the development of

³ The British derogatorily called it the Hut Tax in Sierra Leone. This led to the war that saw Bai Bureh exiled to Gold Coast, present day Ghana.

the land for which the loans are taken goes with other charges. It is therefore little surprising for the reader to see the Kanua Kanene & CO (Valuers and Surveyors, Auctioneers, Land, Estate & Management Agents), acting on the instructions given to it by the Wilson, Shah, Muragi Advocates on behalf of their client, African Economic Bank, sell by public auction Mrs Nyakinyua's land situated in New Ilmorog because she is not able to pay back her loan. This has also been the fate of many other Ilmorogans as confirms what follows:

She was not alone: a whole lot of peasants and herdsmen of Old Ilmorog who had been lured into loans and into fencing off their land and buying imported fertilisers and were unable to pay back were similarly affected. Without much labour, without much machinery, without breaking with old habits and outlook, and without much advice they had not been able to make the land yield enough to meet their food needs and pay back the loans. Some used the money to pay school fees. Now the inexorable law of the metal power was driving them from the land. (Petals, p. 275)

It is obvious that the loans constitute a real poison and that the rationale behind the social and infrastructural revolution in Ilmorog is to throw the indigenes out of their land without knowing who to point an accusing finger at. But it can be deduced that the African Economic Bank only functions as a visor to mask the real faces of the greedy local authorities who collude with foreign companies to buy the forfeited lands. It is in this regard that Melber Henning intimates that these authorities are the final executors of the policies of the ruthless exploitative and greedy colonial regimes; and that the new "liberators" only tend to reproduce the past rather than offer genuine poverty alleviating alternatives (2008) may be considered valid.

The use of violent action as a means of sustaining the exploitative hegemony of the Nderis, the Chuis, the Kimerias, the Mzigos and the Reverend Ezekiel Wawerus is not just limited to the lumpen proletariat, it is also extended to people in the upper class who militate in favour of the downtrodden. This has been the fate of Mr Hawkins, the lawyer who defends Munira, Karega and Abdulla (under police custody at the Central Police Station for having indirectly initiated the molestation of MP Nderi wa Riera at the Jeevanjee Gardens) and succeeds in getting them acquitted and discharged. This he does by painting the deplorable condition of Ilmorog and pointing out that the need for the march to the capital could have been obviated if the authorities had taken their assignment seriously:

He described Ilmorog with such phrases as a "deserted homestead", a "forgotten village" an island of underdevelopment which after being sucked thin and dry was itself left standing, static, a grotesque distorted image of what peasant life was and could be. He castigated the negligence of those entrusted with the task of representing the people. If the people's representatives did their duty, would such a journey have

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been necessary? He summed up by describing their epic journey in such detail that
the people in court, even the magistrates, were visibly moved. (Petals, p. 184)*

Knowing the tragic fate the pre and early post-colonial predators reserve for the people's organic intellectuals who attempt to build a buffer or no-contact zone between them and their prey, the critic receives the news about Mr Hawkins assassination without much surprise. It can be argued that if Patrice Lumumba was killed and immersed into mining acid (Bolivar, 2008, p. 23) and Waiyaki wa Hinga was buried alive at Kibwezi "head facing the bowels of the earth" (Ngugi, 2009, p. 3), the murder and abandonment of Mr Hawkins' corpse in the bush for hyenas to regale on may not be regarded as gruesome as the first two. However, the message behind the show of extreme ruthlessness by the predators and hegemony builders remains the same: defenders of the exploited do so to their own sorrow! The show of inhumanity by both pre- and post-colonial political magnates may also serve both as a warning and a piece of advice to potential destabilizers.

This is the same warning that permeates *Matigari*. And like the oppressor-oppressed situation developed in Farah's trilogy, Ngugi's *Matigari* examines an identical situation where the loyalists-to-the-law succeed to a large extent in forcing the masses into their shells of submission with the help of the national security forces and to a lesser extent, with the assistance of foreign forces, particularly the British. It is observed that whoever dares raise a voice or finger to act in contravention of the dictates of people-in-power is dealt with ruthlessly.

Matigari catalogues the dastardly acts orchestrated by the security forces against those organic individuals who dare protest against the two-world Kenya of exploiter-exploited, or of those who frequently visit the toilet and those who do not (p. 55), or of those who consume all the fruits of others' labour and those who labour without consuming the fruits of their labour. In *Matigari*, the reader witnesses a boundless show of police ruthlessness in the business of taming dissenters in order to protect the exploiters. Arbitrary arrests, unlawful detentions and summary executions are rife, thus rendering Kenya inhospitable for the various shades of the marginalized community. Students and teachers are perhaps the most targeted given their open inclination to Matigari's Marxist project. In fact, convinced that a "thieving spirit cannot be appeased by sacrifice," (p. 121), a student victim exhorts people to listen to Matigari and "sing with those who were detained yesterday, those gaoled the day before yesterday and the fifty who were killed this morning by the security forces" (p. 121). This wastage of lives, reminiscent of the Tiananmen Square killings, is manifestative of leadership callousness: dictators do not seem to care about the number of human lives wasted by their security forces as long as such waste guarantees them security in their

political positions, and also helps them guarantee the security of the John Boys and the Robert Williams, physical agents of the colonial continuum.

Efforts to consolidate the colonial continuum are seen in the Minister of Truth and Justice's parody of justice in which Ngaruro wa Kiriro and Matigari ma Njiruungi are sent to a psychiatric hospital by the judges for mental examination – Ngaruro wa Kiriro for spearheading a strike action against the Anglo-American Leather factory to demand wage increase as does Ibrahima Bakayoko in *Les Bouts du bois de Dieu* or Etienne in *Germinal* by Sembène Ousmane and Emile Zola; and Matigari for berating John Boy and Robert Williams for their predatory tendencies and for talking at the Minister of Truth and Justice and opposing a presidential decree (*Matigari*, pp. 122-125).⁴ But while Bakayoko and Etienne's actions produce the desired results, Ngaruro and Matigari's actions do not. More crucially, what seems sad in the case of Ngaruro and Matigari is that, the public, in spite of the burning desire to come to their rescue, is incapacitated from doing so because of the fiery posture of the regime's armed dogs, to employ an Orwellian nomenclature. The disgruntled public is practically paralyzed or becomes just another zombified community like Ebla's walking dead in *Sardines*.

This justice delivery system captured above is probably the apogee of self-debasement by the people-in-power. Observing the situation with patriotic lenses, it seems indefensible to embark on a colossal campaign of hunting and exterminating dissenters for the good of the few-in-power particularly when these few include people abhorred for their proclivity to predatory practices. What seems paradoxical is that, the insane consider the sane insane. Should there be any group of people who need mental attention, it can be argued that it is the Minister of Truth and Justice, his acolytes and the security forces, for, as is depicted in *Matigari*, they are the ones who have abandoned all pretensions to sanity and humanity. Thus, by using the services of the Minister of Truth and Justice and the security forces, the government of His Excellency Ole Excellence repeats the warning given to those who fight on the camp of the oppressed in *Petals*: defenders of the exploited do so to their own sorrow!

Slate Two (b): Economic Violence

It is noted that apart from the use of guns to tame dissenters in order to sustain the status quo in the East African states under review, Ngugi also captures

⁴ Ngaruro and Matigari are helped by Guthera (the prostitute) to escape from this mental hospital. However, Ngaruro is later killed but Matigari succeeds in wreaking large-scale havoc on the property of John Boy by setting the entire estate on fire.

other forms of arms employed by economic predators to create a worldly hell for people who want to enfranchise themselves economically. It is a dystopia akin to Ulrich Beck's "Municipal Darwinism" (Beck et al., 2004, p. 65) where the Metropolitan superstructure devours smaller cities, and small-scale businesses in conquered territories; or perhaps as a superstructure that promotes the vampire ideology of consumer capitalism or the law of the jungle where the fittest survive (Bullen & Parsons, 2007). What this suggests is that, the disembedded others (the oppressed masses) are made to suffer both physical and fiscal violence so that a few greedy individuals will perpetrate their hegemony. In short, the old binary configuration of opulent colonizing minority and indigent colonized majority is seen mimicked and re-historicized in the Kenyan space.

The bitter experience tasted by the people of Ilmorog lends validity to Ast's argument in Armah's *Osiris Rising*, that "[t]here is plenty of evidence that the independence game only stabilized European and American control" (p. 36). Ilmorog (*Petals*) and Nairobi (*Matigari*) are consumed mainly by the capitalist flames of the British and American multinationals; and even the small-scale businesses are made to squirm under the heavy wheels of capitalism and forced to go bankrupt. It can be posited that since capitalism must not wear a human face, it is understandable why Kenyan capitalists have to hide behind institutions like banks, insurance and foreign companies, particularly the African Economic Bank and the Kanua Kanene & Co.

It is made clear in *Petals* that Ilmorog has not only been consumed by multinationals, but even small-scale businesses are forced to fold by people with larger capital and greedy dispositions. Wanja and Abdulla are thrown out of their bar and Theng'eta (locally brewed alcohol) business by Chui, Kimeria and Mzigo. Old Abdulla, an erstwhile freedom fighter, is left with no other alternative but to lead a life of frustration while Wanja resumes her former trade, prostitution, and even establishes a whore house. It should be noted that Abdulla and Wanja's Theng'eta business in their bar was already doing very well and even had an edge over bigger bar investments owned by Chui, Nderi and Kimeria. It can even be assumed that there was already hope for them to be among the next set of Kenyan Rockefellers. But with the withdrawal of their license to sell local wine (*Petals*, p. 279), their hope for real independence is seen shattered. Chui, Nderi and Kimeria do not only hijack the Theng'eta business from them, they also hijack the wonderful advert originally made by Munira for Abdulla and Wanja. It can be asserted that here again mimicry of capitalist colonial conduct is seen to be at its grimmest: stopping someone from doing something only for them to do the same thing later and in a much amplified manner.

It is observed that through Abdulla and Wanja's Theng'eta business, Ngugi, just like Sembène, demonstrates that with enterprising individuals, riches can be created from within. Oumar Faye's pro-poor policies in *Ô Pays mon beau people* demonstrate that one only needs to be enterprising to attain economic independence, a sine qua non for real independence. Oumar Faye believes in the transformative might of his Casamance soil and toils in it assiduously in order to produce positive results. And indeed, he does produce positive results. Faye, just like Mr Hawkins, the pro-poor lawyer in *Petals*, is therefore perceived by the colonial administration as a subversive element whose actions will not fail to culminate in throwing them out of business and sending them packing back to native France. To prevent this, Oumar Faye is assassinated by the field workers of the empire, thus transforming his Casamance renaissance project into a nightmare. It should be noted that Oumar Faye has been featured in this article in order to shore up our argument that Chui, Nderi and Kimeria are only aping or mimicking a practice that has worked for the different brands of colonial masters in Africa under the stewardship of the Frederick Lugards or the Faidherbes.

Thus, when Farah portrays Somalia as a space filled with land mines which require the politically conscious to tread with caution, Ngugi presents Kenya as a space replete with economic traps set by the upholders of the economic hegemony bequeathed to them by the British colonial administration. The Minister of Truth and Justice labels these sustainers – he is one of them of course – as the loyalists-to-the law and even goes to uncalled-for lengths to preen himself on such inheritance:

My father was the first person in this country to advocate loyalty to the Crown at the beginning of the century. Some might wonder: Loyalty to whose law? The colonial law? Let me tell you: Law is law. Those who realised this from the beginning are the only people in power today. Long live loyalty! (Matigari, p. 102)

If it is Ngugi's intention to mock early political scientists for their predilection for "isms", or the Minister of Truth and Justice for his seemingly deliberate corruption of the word "loyalty" to probably demonstrate the fact that he is able to corrupt everything, our intention is different. It is of some interest to us because it creates for us the possibility to rename the subaltern collaborators of the empire builders as loyalists-to-the-law (of exploitation of the masses) who use the same aggressive economic and governance policies used by their colonial predecessors to worsen the living conditions of the subaltern people of the spaces under review. And like Farah's political dictators, Ngugi's loyalists-to-the-law will use every wile to ensure that the masses are entrapped in permanent poverty. The KKC and the African Economic Bank are not known to be of any positive life-

changing vectors in Kenya, but rather, as vectors that accelerate the economic disenfranchisement of the masses.

The binary configuration of indigent followership and opulent leadership left behind and still supervised by the colonial master continues to hold sway and the creator of the wealth in the Kenyan economy continues to survive on the leftovers of the few but potent exploiters. The enormity of this calamity is made vivid in Matigari's chained metaphors where the capitalist predator moves into the house built by the exploited while the indigenous owner sleeps in the open air; where the predator who does not even know how to thread a needle wears the clothes while the indigenous tailor walks in rags; where the predator who reaps-where-he-never-sowed yawns for having eaten too much while the tiller yawns for not having eaten at all; and where the foreign predators dispose of the goods produced by the exploited indigene while the said indigene is left empty handed (p. 113).

The above jeremiads seem to demonstrate that the third space negotiated for by the freedom fighters is indeed a dystopia worse than the old one, in that the old moral problems inherent in the colonial regimes (injustice, exploitation, torture and assassination of forward-looking, pro-poor individuals) are seen resurfacing or being re-historicized by people who are supposed to fight for their eradication.

Conclusion

As has been demonstrated in the analysis of the two different East African spaces reviewed in this study, one under a military regime (Somalia) and the other under civilian regime (Kenya), mimicry of the colonial leaders by their replacements is palpable. It is observed that the two post-colonial regimes are new, but not quite. Not quite, because, they are seen rehashing the same tools of domination and exploitation used by the colonial field workers to sustain economic and political hegemony over the subaltern masses. And like the colonial master, the cult of violence is presented as an irresistible attraction for the post-colonial imitators. In consequence thereof, the reviewed spaces remain inhospitable for those at the periphery of the power structure, particularly those who want liberty of expression and economic independence. It has also been made evident that for the indigent masses, the said spaces remain dystopias of uncertainty; uncertain as to who will be the true autochthones to rekindle hope in them for a truly dignified existence.

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