

WHERE DID THE AFRICAN LEADERS GO WRONG? AN
ANALYSIS OF SELECTED TEXTS BY PETER ABRAHAMS
AND AYI KWEI ARMAH.

BY

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DEDICATION

To all those who helped me discover who I am:

Tebi, Mandi, Kudzie, Liz, Fellie, Jane, Farai, and lastly but not least, Ray.

To those that brought great laughter in my life:

Gondai, Tsitsi, Rujeko and the BOYS (D.J &Bo)

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this dissertation is to examine where the African leaders have gone wrong considering that they have been blamed for the lack of development in Africa. It looks at their failure as a betrayal of the aims and ideals of the people at independence. This lack of development has been attributed to their lack of ideology. This dissertation seeks to discover to what extent this applies.

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INTRODUCTION

The area of study of this dissertation is an examination of where the post-colonial leadership has gone wrong by African writers in English with specific reference to Peter Abrahams and Ayi Kwei Armah. The focus is on Ghana which was the first independent African state and served as an inspiration to other countries. In this context, it is used as a microcosm of Africa.

The texts under examination are *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, *Fragments*, *The Healers*, *A Wreath for Udomo* and *This Island Now*. *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* and *A Wreath for Udomo* deal specifically with the Nkrumah regime. The two texts are complimentary with *A Wreath for Udomo* focusing on leaders; Udomo, Mhendi and Lanwood, their thoughts, attitudes and feelings in relation to leadership in Ghana before and after independence. *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* has the spotlight on the ordinary folk represented by “the man” who works for the Railway Company. *Fragments* also focuses on the ordinary folk seeking ways to elevate themselves from poverty through the been-tos in the family whom they elevate as leaders.

The main theme in all the texts is betrayal albeit at different levels. In examining this betrayal I will be able to point out where the African leaders have gone wrong and therefore answer the title question. Most significant is the betrayal of the dream of Independence. People expected a Utopian world, where

all the inequalities experienced during colonialism would be swept away and everyone lived happily ever after. The leaders helped to feed this dream with their speeches and hence the reality of independence only fostered a deep sense of betrayal on the part of the led.

The aim of this dissertation is to find out why “the dreams of contemporary intellectuals and politicians have failed to materialize” and why everyone feels nothing has changed. I intend to contrast, in given places, the portrayal of the leaders’ betrayal by the authors with historical evidence on the achievements of the leaders so as to examine the extent of their failures.

Chapter One will focus on the issue of whether the betrayal is deliberate; a scheme by power hungry villains to get the support of the “masses” to further their own ends. This is what Armah seems to suggest with his invocation of “men already grown fat and cynical with the eating of centuries of power” [*The Beautiful Ones*, 1968:81]. According to Armah, this type of betrayal to feed one’s lust for power has been inherited over centuries in Africa and is not necessarily a malady grown out of colonialism. Peter Abrahams also has such characters in the form of Dr. Endura in *A Wreath for Udomo*.

Chapter Two will look at betrayal as not necessarily intentional but due to the influence of colonialism on the leaders. They have been rendered ineffectual by lack of ideology, lack of creativity and lack of confidence in their own people

and hence their Eurocentricism. This is signified by hungering after, and rushing towards, the gleam in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* and the Cargo cult in *Fragments*. *A Wreath for Udomo* is more illuminating on this point as adoption of Western models of government is portrayed as being necessary for development in Africa. The social misery in *The Beautiful Ones* and *Fragments* counters this. How much of Europe was to be accepted and how much to be rejected in order to avoid betrayal and steer the country on the right track? This is one of the questions the chapter hopes to answer.

Chapter three will focus on the problem of the Messianic approach to liberation. It is clear in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* that the people look at Nkrumah as the messiah to lead them out of their misery just as in *The Healers* they look up to Asamoah Nkwanta. Their hope is not in their ability to work together to achieve something, but in Nkrumah leading them to solutions. Even in *A Wreath for Udomo* Nkrumah's personality is pushed forward to be the rallying point of the people's allegiance. This has been the nature of politics in Africa; that one leader is venerated above all others he works with. This "personality cult" approach to leadership is linked with a lack of ideology in the previous chapter but also shows that the leader is not totally to blame. The led themselves must change their perception of leadership. On the part of the leaders, this chapter will question the idea of divine destiny: Udomo seems to believe that he was born to lead Africa to independence. What power checks

can be imposed on the Messiah, one with God-given role to lead the people to success? The goal being success, does that not justify whatever means used?

Chapter four will look at the Pan-African vision in relation to today's conflicts among African states themselves. What is more important; the unity of Africa or satisfying one's country? Udomo in *A Wreath for Udomo* sacrifices the Pan-African vision for the national interest. The historical Nkrumah was very active in Pan-African affairs, helping Guinea financially after the withdrawal of French support. Among the reasons for the 1966 Coup de tat is one that soldiers feared being sent to Vietnam and Rhodesia. In the face of the suffering Ghanaians as portrayed in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* which is best to pursue first, the national or Pan-African interest? How is this to affect international relations in the new global world? Is this determined by the people or outside forces?

The concluding chapter will assess whether it is correct to assume the leaders have been wrong in the face of evidence in the main body of the dissertation. It will also assess whether or not the prophecies of Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth* and Abrahams in *A Wreath for Udomo* (in the form of the Pan-African Vision being aborted in the betrayal of Mhendi) have come to pass.

CHAPTER ONE

DELIBERATE BETRAYAL

Africa under white European rule was divided into a number of colonies for easier control. The entire economy of the continent was planned to serve not the African people but the European and American masters. Independence did not mean that this enslaving arrangement was destroyed. On the contrary, in place of white governors working to keep the African people down we have African heads of states and their parasitic elite maintaining the same old exploitative system in which the economy served European and American needs. The African ruling classes do not rule in the interest of African people. If they function at all, they function as agents of white power¹.

Ayi Kwei Armah, 1968.

This chapter argues that Africa's problem is that some of its leaders have sold out to Europe and America deliberately, for their own personal gain. The year 1968 saw the publication of *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, Ayi Kwei Armah's first novel that deals with the betrayal of the "masses" by the rulers. Robert Fraser summarizes Armah's works in the following dictum; "Africa he

constantly accuses of self-betrayal and Europe of downright oppression.”² This implies that the betrayal by the rulers is intentional, to serve their own interests. The rulers we see in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* are self-serving from “the jokers” right up to Koomson. At this point it is necessary to digress into the history of Ghana to understand the type of leadership portrayed in Armah’s works.

Ghana, being part of West Africa, shares the history of early contact with Europe in terms of education and hence has generations of the educated elite as compared to other parts of Africa. Being in close contact with Liberia and Sierra Leone, the ex-slaves colonies, which strongly believed that the way forward was to embrace Europe’s civilization and shun all that is African which they regarded as barbaric and retrogressive, influenced the Ghanaian elites. James Africanus Horton believed that the role of the re-captives and educated Africans was to rid the African of his past. Later, nationalists believed in merging the African institutions with those of Europe but their assumptions were basically European since they were well educated men in the Western tradition. Edward Blyden and Joseph Casely Hayford believed in the African institutions as valid in the process of civilizing Africa. The elite of the time were mainly lawyers, doctors and philosophers who believed that the education conferred on them automatically validated their claim to leadership. They knew how other nations operated, they could use “modern” institutions to launch their petitions for

freedom from Europe and make their nations great. In the late 1940s, the elite formed the United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC) to campaign for self – government from British rule. Their main reason for lobbying for self-government being that they realised that their power, or rather exercise of power, was limited by having to report to the metropolitan Britain. They saw themselves as doing the masses a favour and saw themselves as superior because of their education and life-style, which were similar to those of middle-class Europeans. Joseph Casely Hayford's *Ethiopia Unbound*³ fully portrays the life-style of the elite through Kwamankra, a member of staff at Mfantsipism National University, who takes a holiday visiting Japan, Germany, America and England because of his deteriorating health. Armah describes the elite of his time through Teacher's memories of the jokers,

There is something so terrible in watching a black man trying at all points to be the dark ghost of a European, and that was what we were seeing in those days. Men who had risen to lead the hungry came in clothes they might have been hoping to use at Governor's Balls on the birthdays of the white people's queen, carrying cuff links that shone insultingly in the face of men who had stolen pennies from their friends. (*The Beautiful Ones*, 1968:81)

Vying for power too, were the workers at the docks and in industry who had learnt the power of collective bargaining. These were ordinary folk without

much education but yearning after the lifestyle of the elite. These leaders became prominent with the rise of the Convention People's Party (C.P.P.) engineered by Kwame Nkrumah. Their opportunism is evidenced in the fact that those that failed to get seats in the party-posts joined the opposition in the next election. Singing party-slogans was therefore a ticket to power, one that Koomson uses in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*. Two ways were therefore open to lead one to power; elitism and what Paul Gifford calls clientelism, that is, those who do not belong to the elite are elevated through their allegiance to the elite and their line of thinking. In his historical works, *The Healers* and *Two Thousand Seasons*, Armah shows that fawning to those with power to save one's skin is an old trick inherent in the history of Africa and hence the new leaders are not doing anything new; they are just the new dancers of an old dance.

The Healers, like *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* and *Fragments*, is set in Ghana albeit ancient Ghana just before conquest by the white men. *The Healers* reveals that the seeds of the rottenness that engulfs modern Ghana were sown in pre-colonial times and explores the disease, namely, lust for power. The main concern of Ababio is how to get power, whilst other kings are obsessed with how to keep power at all cost and not how to serve the people under them. When the story begins, in the middle of the games, Ababio is trying to convince Densu, his ward, to join him in a plot to usurp power from the rightful heir,

Prince Appiah. To assist him in his scheme, Ababio enlists the help of a renegade healer, Esuman, who is equally power hungry. Ababio uses cunning, threatens where necessary and even murders (as in the case of Prince Appiah and the attempted murder of Densu) to get what he wants. Esuman is responsible for mystification, the use of spiritual incantations that ordinary men are not supposed to understand. This same method is used by the priests at Kumase who serve Asante royalty. Ababio's case is quite interesting in terms of its parallels with modern leaders and the observations made by some critics. For instance, Chinua Achebe in *The Trouble with Nigeria* argues that leaders ought to "rise to the responsibility, to the challenge of personal example which are the hallmarks of true leadership"ⁱ Ababio is from a slave family and all he has learnt about power, he has learnt from the masters. Explaining his actions to Densu, Ababio relates his grandfather's dream and how he rose to power from being a mere slave at Kumase. Ababio says,

Habits learned at the larger court at Kumase stood my grandfather in good stead here. He knew how to talk, and he did not make the mistake of wasting his eloquence in honest talk. He used his tongue profitably, only on flattering the powerful. His loyalty was unquestioning; so it became unquestionable.... Do I still need to tell you I know all there is to know about power? The knowledge is in the spirit my grandfather passed down mixed with the blood of our mothers. I can show you the quickest roads

to power: blind loyalty to those who already have the greatest power.

(*The Healers*, 1978:300)

At the royal court of Kumase the priests are afraid to tell the truth during the times of the omens because anyone who speaks against royalty is put to death. The ruled, epitomized by the slaves, learn to lie, to be cunning, a phenomenon to be found in the later leaders represented by “the jokers” and Koomson in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* and Asante-Smith in *Fragments* who specializes in singing praises of the government through Ghanavision. By coming from a slave family, Ababio represents the most despised and deprived society. His hunger for and envy of power is similar to that of blacks, especially the elite, under colonial rule. They covet what the whites have and long for a day they will replace them, and they use whatever means at their disposal to achieve their goal. Ababio uses the whites to help him into power and later boasts,

This is a new day in the land. The whites are in control. They recognise those who have helped them. They recognize me, Ababio, as king of Esuano. Whatever goes against me will have to take on the whites. They protect me. They look after me. Whatever I want from them, I can ask for it, and I'll get it. (*The Healers*, 1978:299)

This means that Ababio's power is not as real as he would have others believe. The real rulers are the whites at Cape Coast. The kings at Cape Coast also sell their people for British pounds and implicitly hand over their power to the whites. They are to get "ten pounds for one thousand fighting men". One of the kings, arguing in favour, says,

"But the ten pounds are for our own use only. The whites will give food to the fighters and pay them. Everything." This was the big, quiet King Amfo Otu the one from Abora. "And who knows, if all the food and pay and ammunition are to be distributed by us, we may find ways to end up with considerably more than these ten pounds." (*The Healers*, 1978:211)

So while the kings grow fatter and increase wealth in their coffers, their people die on the war front. Instead of uniting with the Asante army to drive away the whites from their land, they unite with the whites. This implies that the Pan-African dream is already aborted as there is no unity among the Africans. The kings agree to be middle-men, aiding in the destruction of their own people. In *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, in anguish, Teacher says,

How long will Africa be cursed with its leaders? There were men dying from the loss of hope, and others were finding gaudy ways to enjoy power they did not have, but what we had was our own black men hugging new paunches scrambling to ask the white men to welcome them

on our backs. These men who were to lead us out of our despair, they came like men already grown fat and cynical with the eating of centuries of power they had never struggled for, old before they had even been born into power and ready only for the grave. They were lawyers before something growing greasy on the troubles of people who worked the land, but now they were out to be our saviours. (*The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, 1968:80-81)

The leaders are regarded as a curse because their claim to power is not validated by Africa itself but by the oppressors. The point being made is that, for centuries African leaders have pretended to serve the interests of their people while actually impervious to the troubles of the masses, so are the new leaders (lawyers and merchants) impervious to the need of the masses. A good example of this phenomenon is found in *The Healers* where many human sacrifices are made, first to enable the Asante army to go and attack its enemies, gain more slaves and hence uphold the pride of the Asante army; secondly to try and ward off General Wolsley's army from attacking Kumase. At face value this might seem like the Asantehene wants to protect the integrity of Kumase and provide security for his people. However, the fact that they leave Kumase and send an order to stop fighting and let the whites walk all over Kumase uninhibited dispels this view. The royalty simply want to keep their power as reported by Oson,

“The King asked if she believed your way was not the only way to stop the whites from reaching Kumase. Her answer was yes. But then she asked the king if he would rather be king of a violated kingdom or be nothing in a virgin nation.”

Yes she asked him that. She said if Asante followed Asamoa Nkwanta from becoming king of the inviolate nation. She said the wisdom of a king lay in knowing at all times what to do in order to remain king. If what should be done now was to yield a bit to the whites, better there than to lose all power to an upstart general.” (*The Healers*, 1978:291)

In the above quotation can be seen seeds of the modern phenomenon that leaders refuse to step out of power even when they know that they have failed dismally as leaders. Leaders who concede a little power to the whites benefit financially and are treated better than the rest of their people as already noted. Having acted as middle men for many years, they try to regain their power in the same way that Dr. Endura in *A Wreath for Udomo* tries to, by bargaining and cunning. Dr. Endura and his council of elders mislead Smithers into believing everything is okay, when he discovers that it is not true, Dr. Endura tries to convince Smithers that he is the right candidate to take over.

“...I’ve been waiting for this situation for a very long time. Now it has arisen. The way out is to revise the constitutional position so that power is

transferred to us. Only we can restore the people to the calm Udomo has disturbed. Of course, you know, Smithers, we'll need you for a very long time to come. You have know-how and the best and cleanest Service in the world and we would be fools to get rid of that. We shall probably need you for at least half a century, if not longer. But we, the traditional rulers, are the only people who can now restore order without having to resort to violence. In fact, I doubt if even violence on the part of the police or military can permanently restore our situation now." "You are bargaining for power!" Smithers exploded. "Yes, of course. If you don't like it, consider the alternative. And remember, politics is the art of the possible; for sensible men, that is. Our friend Udomo would have no compunction about setting the whole land on fire. You and I have this in common. We both want law and order restored to the land as soon as possible." (*A Wreath for Udomo*, 1956:175)

Historically this is the time when the people of Africa were clamouring for self-rule. In Ghana itself, this was the time of the dock strikes and those by other workers. Dr. Endura tries to hijack the struggle and is content to be the window-dressing to disguise continued white rule. This phenomenon is examined in many African texts, for example, Sembene's *Last of the Empire*, Ngugi's *Devil on the Cross*, *Petals of Blood*, *I'll Marry when I want*, just to name a few. When the people see black people in positions of power, they will believe that their

dreams have been achieved and only resume fighting long after the black elite has consolidated its power and is able to crush all opposition.

In other words, once the revolution has been derailed, it is difficult to put it back in place. Dr. Endura is part of the elite and is also a traditional leader. By insisting on his traditional role he reinforces the idea of a century-old-betrayal from the time of conquest as already noted. Just as the royal family is out of touch with the lives of ordinary people and is mainly concerned with court wrangles and rivalries, Dr Endura is totally estranged from the people; first by his upbringing as a traditional leader and secondly as a member of the colonial elite. He, however, consciously uses his position to access and maintain power.

Traditional power, as shown by the Asante in *The Healers*, is based on maintaining the status quo and making sure that everyone knows and understands their position. Asamoah Nkwanta cannot imagine a world without kings and slaves. Dr. Endura, believing in this power, dismisses Udomo as an upstart. In a letter to Adebhoy he writes;

I have to inform you that it is not the policy of this council to give hearings to any unknown persons simply at their own request. Furthermore, the Council directs me to inform you that there is no record of any family by the name Udomo ever having held any position of authority as either chief or elder in any of the major tribes of Panafrica.

The Council therefore considers the man you write about an ambitious upstart with whom the Council as the traditional representative of the people can have no dealing. Your information of what he did in Europe is of no interest to the Council... (*A Wreath for Udomo*, 1956:133)

Avenues of communication with the people they represent are closed as they do not “give hearings to unknown persons.” Small tribes are also disregarded as they accept chiefs or elders of the “major tribes.” Merit does not count to Dr. Endura and his kind, only blood counts. However, his sensibilities are closer to those of the Europeans as evidenced by a description of him given by Adebhoy,

Dr. T.T.S. Endura is secretary of the Council and also its most educated and powerful member. He is cousin to the King of the Southern people and the African member of the Governor’s council. He and the Governor are great friends; he is much respected in European circles. (*A Wreath for Udomo*, 1956:133)

Dr. Endura’s insistence that he and Smithers want the same thing (i.e. law and order) is further evidence of where his loyalties lie. Like Ababio in *The Healers* he believes the European law is the best, the civilized way. In his pursuit of Densu’s death, Ababio insists that

“Now we will have to arrange another trial. A civilized trial. The whites keep telling us we used to do things like sleep walkers in the past. Now

they say they've opened our eyes. We're civilized. No more ritual trials with the drug of death. This time we will have a proper court. A whole white man will come from Cape Coast to see to it that everything is done properly, in the new civilized style. You'll get a chance to talk in defence of yourself. Then you'll hand Densu." (*The Healers*, 1978:301)

We note the reference to civilization in relation to the whites, Ababio believes they have brought civilization. Consequently he gives the whites the power to judge issues that happened before they arrived in Africa which amounts to giving them the license to re-write African History, in other words, conceding to Orientalism that E.W. Said⁵ has analysed in his book by the same title. For Ababio the rewriting does not matter as long as it works to his advantage. Ironically the tables turn on him on the day of the trial despite his earlier pronouncement that the whites will protect him. What Ababio and Dr. Endura do not realize is that new middlemen can always be found and real power comes from the people. Being in favour with the people eliminates the need for repression and manipulation. The 'jokers' in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* also fail to understand this concept. We are told

They came late and spoke to their servants in the legal English they had spend their lives struggling to imitate, talking of constitutions and offering us unseen ghosts of words and paper held holy by Europeans, and they asked us to be faithful and to trust them. They spoke to us in the

knowledge that they were our magicians, people with some secret power behind them. (*The Beautiful Ones*, 1968:81)

These leaders fail to capture the hearts of the people because their method has failed considering that for over half a century the educated people had been trying to attain independence as evidenced by speeches by Casely Hayford.ⁱⁱ This then paves the way for elite leaders who are more or less still in touch with the needs of their people, in other words, the “Veranda Boys” who have attained western education.

“Veranda Boys” is the term given to poor people with no accommodation and therefore content to sleep on other people’s verandas. It can however be loosely applied to poor people in general. What people are not aware of is that their education has turned them into allies of the system, a phenomenon well laid out by Armah in *Why Are We So Blest?*. Solo realizes that the privileges awarded the elite are not awards for intelligence, but for parroting the ideologies of the West and selling out on the freedom of their people. Historically Achimota College (which Nkrumah and the members of the elite castigated in Armah’s works attended) was set up near Accra by Governor Guggesberg in 1922 as a deliberate elite-creating institution along the lines of the British public schools. Therefore we find Udomo, Mabi, Adebhoy and Lanwood fitting well in the European lifestyle away from home. Baako’s script, “The Brand” in *Fragments*

outlines the transformation of the Veranda Boy in his search for power to free his people.

AT THE END HERO HAS ARRIVED AND IS CLINGING DANGEROUSLY TO THE SHEER SIDE OF THE SQUARE, NOT GOING DOWN. IT'S PLAIN THE CLIMB ITSELF, THE PROCESS OF GETTING TO THE SQUARE, HAS INJECTED INTO HIS BEING AN ADDICTION TO WAYS AND HABITS DIAMETRICALLY OPPOSED TO THE LIBERATOR'S CAREER. (*Fragments*, 1969:148)

Consequently when the call is made for the nation to sacrifice for the development of the country, the leaders do not change their lifestyles: attending numerous cocktail parties, drinking expensive and imported wines, a feature seen in *A Wreath for Udomo* and *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*. This reminds one of a poem by Henry Barlow entitled "Nation Building" where the persona, a Minister's chauffeur, drives him to a business luncheon, stays outside in the car for hours on end, hungry, while the Minister feasts. The minister comes out complaining about work and the chauffeur observes that they both have ulcers from nation building although one is from over eating and the other from fasting, just a difference in job descriptions. This humorous poem exposes the betrayal by leadership, their hypocrisy in professing a willingness to make sacrifices for their country and yet they enjoy themselves at the expense of the masses. When the people realise what is going on, some try hard to join the

ranks of those “eating” in order to save themselves and their families only as in the case of Koomson in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*. Ababio’s formula of “blind loyalty to those who already have the greatest power” is put in practice. In the new Ghana

Everybody says with a wave of the hand, “Oh you know, the ideological thing. Winneba.” True. That is where the shit of the country is going nowadays, believing nothing, saying they believe everything that needs to be believed, so long as the big lobs and the big money follow. Men who know nothing about politics have grown hot with ideology, thinking of the money that will come, the civil servant who hates socialism is there singing hosanna. The poet is there, serving power and waiting to fill his coming with crumbs. He will no doubt jump to go and fit his tongue into new arses when the new men spring up to shit on us. (*The Beautiful Ones*, 1968:89)

So when Koomson buys the fishing boat he is doing what he got into power to do and uses the man’s family as a cover. For this, they occasionally get fresh fish.

The boatman is loyal and shows reverence to Koomson while he is still in power but becomes bolder after he is toppled. The system working here is what Paul Gifford calls “clientelism.” He writes,

In a neo-patrimonial state, support is ensured by clientelism, a relationship of exchange in which a superior provides security for an inferior, who as a client then provides political support for his patron. Control of the state carries with it the ability to provide (and of course, to withhold) security and to allocate benefits in the form of jobs, development projects and so on. ... In this way clientelism both maintains ruling class interests and at the same time effectively prevents the rise of a political factor. Clientelism has thus militated against the rise of revolutionary movements in Africa.⁷

Clientelism is exemplified through Brempong in *Fragments*. His whole family (nuclear and extended) come to meet him at the airport where they make a display of power. Even the powerless among them feel they have power through Brempong who represents them. Baako's family expects him to do the same but he refuses to betray his vision of working for his people on a national scale. The elders in *A Wreath for Udomo* think of Mabi's appointment in government as a form of victory over the plains people who hate the mountain people. Mabi's power is their power. The clearest form of clientelism is expressed in Chinua Achebe's *A Man of the People* where chief Nanga withholds development to a district that does not vote for him and decides to vote for Odili. In Nigerian politics the Igbos have always suffered at the hands of other ethnic groups because they lack sufficient representation in the ruling parties. In

Zimbabwe, Manicaland and Matebeleland are backward in terms of development since politically they are predominantly ZANU (Ndonga) and ZAPU as opposed to the ruling party ZANU (PF). Basically what happens is that the rights of the people are withheld in order to consolidate the power of the leaders. Therefore, whatever the power hungry leaders do is designed to increase their own power. As Narrudin Farah puts it, “The African politician is a blind man: he moves only in one direction- towards himself.”ⁱⁱⁱ The politics of Africa is the “politics of the belly”, the coups and counter coups do not change anything. The man in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* muses after the coup;

What, after all, could it mean? One man with the help of people who loved him and believed in him, had arrived at power and used it for himself. Now other men, with the help of guns, had come to this same power. (*The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, 1968:157)

He already knows that they will use the power for themselves. On 23 February 1966, General Ankrah’s army took over power from Nkrumah’s government alleging that Kwame Nkrumah had

completely lost the respect and confidence of the people of his country through his capricious use of power and the draconian measures he resorted to at the expense of our national institutions.^{iv}

However, General Ankrah's National liberation Council condemned and killed General Barwah because of his principles regarding his duty to the state proving that they were worse tyrants than those they replaced. Many coups in Africa have been carried out so as to rid the nations of bad leaders but have resulted in situations worsening. Paul Gifford writes;

Military coups have been a feature of African rule- there were seven in 1966 alone- but even when the reasons for the military's intervention was reform, this has proved beyond its capabilities. The military's power to change society was slight, whereas society's power to subvert it was profound. To a large extent, a clear villain-military dichotomy is difficult to use in categorising African states. Many regimes have the army behind them. In other cases, military leader simply discards his uniform for a three piece suit and goes on to win an election, but the difference this makes is not very clear.^v

So basically coups do not change anything; if anything they impose military discipline on civilian life or promote blood-thirsty activities as exemplified by Idi Amin's reign in Uganda. This too might have its roots in the past as seen by the activities of the Asante army in *The Healers*. Peter Abrahams explores this concept of the army and power in *Wild Conquest* and *The View from Coyaba*. Mzilikazi's army in *Wild Conquest*, like the Asante army in *The Healers*, goes out on expeditions to subdue the subjects and induce terror in them.

Disobedience is punished swiftly as in the case of Chief Tavana who has the king's messengers killed. Mzilikazi and his General, Gubuza, are portrayed as being tired of bloodshed and longing for peace but unable to control the army they created and fail to promote a sense of civil duties amongst its members. Consequently the king allows the witch hunt to continue because the soldiers are thirsty for blood. Tabata, Langa and Ntongolwane plot a coup against Mzilikazi and Gubuza because they have grown soft like women. To them power is expressed through violence.

The underlying question is: If hearts are hardened, how can they be softened again? Power corrupts and, as noted, those that seek power for themselves do so by whatever means necessary. The betrayal of Africa is therefore, in this sense, deliberate as the national and continental agenda is abandoned to enrich the leader and enhance his personal power. However not all African leaders are power hungry, the situations they find themselves in are more complex to allow a simple labelling as "power hungry".

END NOTES

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1. Ayi kwei Armah, "Fanon the Awakener" in *Negro Digest* 18 No. 1 October 1969, p40 quoted in Neil Lazarus, *Resistance in Post Colonial Literatures*, Yale University Press, London, 1990, p28.
 2. Robert Fraser, *The Novels of Ayi Kwei Armah: A Study in Polemical Fiction*, Heinemann, London, 1980, pxi.
 3. J.E. Casley Hayford, *Ethiopia Unbound: Studies in Race Emancipation* (2nd Edition), Frank Cass and Company Ltd, London, 1969.

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4. Chinua Achebe, *The Trouble with Nigeria*, Heinemann, London, 1983, p1.
 6. Magrus J. Sampson, *West African Leadership: Public Speeches Delivered by J.E. Casely Hayford*, Frank Cass & Company, Ltd, London, 1969.
 8. Narrudin Farah, "The Creative Writer and the African Politician" *The Guardian*, Lagos, 9 September, 1983 p11 quoted in Chidi Amuta, *The Theory of African Literature*, Zed Books, London, 1989, p56.
 9. Kwesi Armah, *Ghana: Nkrumah's Legacy*, Rex Collins, London, 1974, p81.
 10. Paul Gifford, *opcit*, p7.

CHAPTER TWO

COMPLEX NATURE OF REBUILDING

I say to you publicly and frankly: The burden of suffering that must be borne, impose it upon one generation! Do not, with false kindness of the missionaries and business men, drag out this agony for another five hundred years while your villages rot and your people's minds sink in the morass of a subjective darkness. ... Be merciful by being stern! If I lived under your regime, I'd ask for this hardness, this coldness...¹

Letter to Nkrumah by Richard Wright, 1954

Having looked at power hungry, self serving leaders and how they help to destroy Africa in a bid to maintain their power in the previous chapter, I now focus on the patriotic leaders whose wrong turns are not deliberate. The failure of these leaders has been largely characterized as due to lack of ideology and creativity, coupled with lack of confidence in the people they lead. In some instances the leader makes wrong decisions because he is out of touch with reality and aspirations of his people. External influences also affect the leader's decisions and at times he has no choice but to follow the dictates of these forces.

The theme of modernity versus tradition is one that has taken precedence in African written literature and its criticism since its inception. Some critics have simplified the problem by equating “modernity” to adopting Western ways and “tradition” to refer to the customs that are specifically indigenous to Africa. At the dawn of independence, this was the question that had to be dealt with: How was Africa to move forward- through recourse to the African ways or by Western models? While it was agreed that the traditional way had failed at conquest (the Africans had been defeated on their own land due to poor technology), the most progressive sought a synthesis of these competing values. As in Cheikh Hamidou Kane’s *Ambiguous Adventure*, they sent their children to the European school “to learn from them the art of conquering without being in the right”² meaning they should learn ways of making themselves stronger to help them win in the next war. The elite, who were sent to school, took over leadership at independence. Some members of this group, as examined in the first chapter, believed that the white man was their mentor, their saviour sent to show them the way. They believed in the superiority of the white man as not being simply technical but omnipotent. Others, however, saw the oppression and included the whites on the list of enemies. Udomo says,

Our country has three enemies. First the white man. Then there is poverty and then there is the past. These are the three enemies. (*A Wreath for Udomo*: 1956:206)

The above quotation contains the aspirations of most African leaders of the newly independent states. The white man had infringed on their rights and treated them as lesser humans, and therefore, had to be eradicated from the new states for the people to feel free from oppression. Secondly, having tasted the good life, visited European countries and seen the infra-structure and their way of life, the elite realised that there was no doubt that most Africans were shrouded in poverty and needed redemption. The eradication of poverty came second on the leader's agenda. Economic plans were drafted and put in motion. The past, as noted before, raised a lot of feelings (most of them unfavourable) and therefore the emphasis was on building something new and strong. The new leaders favoured the Western way because it had facilitated their rise to power by enabling them to lead on educational merit rather than grey hairs or royal blood. It also abolished slavery in West Africa thereby making the caste system ineffective in the new world.

Having attained political independence and believing it to be the beginning of a life free from racial, emotional and economic degradations, the leaders wanted to get rid of the colonial past and rewrite history. A good example is Kwame Nkrumah's speech on independence day:

At long last the battle has ended! And thus Ghana, your beloved country, is free forever. And here again, I want to take the opportunity to thank the

chiefs and people of this country, the youth, the farmers, the women, who have so nobly fought and won this battle. Also I want to thank the valiant ex-servicemen who have co-operated with me in this task of freeing our country from foreign rule and imperialism. ... [F]rom now on we are no more a colonial but a free and independent people! ... We are not waiting; we shall no more go back to sleep. Today from now on, there is a new African in the world and that new African is ready to fight his own battle and show that after all the black man is capable of managing his own affairs. We are going to demonstrate to the world, to other nations, young as we are that we are prepared to lay our own foundations.³

The unity of the people of the new independent state of Ghana is romanticised here as a way of marking the passing of an era, rewriting the history of strife in colonial days and projecting the image Nkrumah longed for albeit it had not been achieved as yet. This is evidenced by the acknowledgement of a need for a new battle to build the nation. Already the seeds of betrayal were being sown, the stage set for feelings of disillusionment after the picturing of a utopia encouraging a sense of having arrived.

One of the memorable questions in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* is when did Nkrumah cease to be a “Veranda boy” and become a “show man.” The idea of show is a syndrome discussed at length in Frantz Fanon’s *Black*

Skin White Masks as the effects of racism and colonialism on blacks. The insistent need to prove that one is as good as the European in order to recapture one's lost humanity. In essence this means that one stops being oneself but acts only on the basis of stimuli and all one's actions become reactions. This basically means that whatever one does, no matter how African in orientation it might seem, is actually Eurocentric. Nkrumah hoped that his state would "show that after all the black man is capable of managing his own affairs." This means that he aimed at providing visual evidence at all times, the syndrome seen in Albert Josiah in *This Island Now*. The betrayal of the revolution then becomes not intentional but facilitated by a sickness inherited from colonialism. Like the self-serving cohorts of the first chapter, the dedicated leader also endorses window dressing, but instead of being motivated by self interest he is moved by great patriotic interest. The effect is however the same.

African leaders in independent Africa are not the same and the situations they meet are not identical, but the plight of Africa has basically been the same. Mobutu Seseseko and Kwame Nkrumah have always been different in outlook but people from their countries saw them as dictators needing to be ousted from power militarily. Neil Lazarus, commenting on Kwame Nkrumah's speech at independence writes,

In 1957 people looked forward to an era of unity, strength and humanity: today's observer would be hard pressed to find much evidence of any of these qualities. Whatever he or she will find in relative abundance, rather, is the exact opposite; fragmentation, weakness and social violence. Independence seems to have brought neither peace nor prosperity to Africa. Instead it has paradoxically borne witness to stagnation, elitism and class domination, and to the intensifying structural dependence- economic, political, cultural and ideological- of Africa upon the imperial Western powers.⁴

So in trying to prove that he is capable of managing his affairs, the patriotic leader wastes energy in creating window dressing to ward off western criticism rather than in real development. He is also forced to adopt a form of government and development that the West will approve of and recognize his humanity. By focusing on the West and its reactions the leader becomes estranged from his people and becomes heavily dependent on the West.

This chapter endeavours to answer Armah's question posited in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*: When do revolutionaries, who have led the people, start working against the people? Peter Abrahams' *A Wreath for Udomo* and *This Island Now* examine the issue at hand more clearly. *This Island Now* is set in the

Caribbean but can be applied to all new independent states as pointed out by Kolawole Ogungbesan in his article “The Politics of *This Island Now*. ”

The overriding quality of *This Island Now* is its simplicity. It is partly an epic simplicity, the subject of the novel being the efforts of an individual to revolutionize the power structure of his society. In addition, it is a simplicity which allows the novel’s political theme, free from accretion of confusing details, to be transferred from its peculiar geographical setting. The problems which confront President Albert Josiah are more than those of a tiny island in the Caribbean; they are problems which face all the developing countries and have threatened to embroil the big powers in a global war.⁵

Tracing Kwame Nkrumah’s career, it would seem as if *This Island Now* is a continuation of *A Wreath for Udomo* showing the later years when the revolutionary ideas seem to hurt those they were put in place for. *A Wreath for Udomo* scratches on the surface of the discontent and hides behind the façade of tribal rituals. Selina and Adebhoy murder Udomo because they want to return to their tribal identities and loyalties once the white man has been vanquished. They do not understand Udomo’s need to develop the country economically. Peter Abrahams has been criticised for his portrayal of tribes, Michael Wade has the following to say,

The most obvious and perhaps startling result, in thematic terms, of Abraham's conversion to liberalism, is the passionate identification with certain mythical beliefs of western industrialised society, which are grouped around the polarities such as "past-future", "primitive-civilised", "corrupt-efficient", "tribal-modern". Indeed the conflict between traditional and modern is one of the main themes of the book. The personal and the political levels of action are inter-related by the operation of this theme in the lives of the major characters. Thus adherence to traditional social attitudes in politics is seen as a negation of individuality in personal life! Towards the end of the book Udomo feels that his erstwhile friend and cabinet colleague, Adebhoy, who betrays him and ultimately has him assassinated for abandoning traditional ways, "has gone back to the past of blood ritual and ancestor worship. Really, Ade had always been there and always a lying smile, like one of those old grimacing masks from the past. Never a person because the person doesn't matter; just a unit in a group. Someone he had never known because there had been no personality to know"⁶

It might be true that Peter Abrahams' knowledge of African customs is scanty since he is coloured and urbanized. Wade quotes the passage on Adebhoy to show that Abrahams is Eurocentric and thinks in binary terms. However this is not necessarily true as Peter Abrahams examines the various aspects of power

and tries to show that the binary good/bad dichotomy does not work in judging the greatness or failure of leaders as evidenced by Mabi's letter to Lois. In one of his articles Abrahams talks of his visit to Jomo Kenyatta's Kenya and Kwame Nkrumah's Ghana, and how he was impressed by their efforts. He states that one of the problems faced by Nkrumah was that of tribalism. Historically this has been proven. The Asante tried at every turn to gain autonomy and the National Movement was predominantly Asante. The Northern tribes also formed an opposition party to Nkrumah's government. This means that regionalism was very much alive and militated against nation-building, the dream Nkrumah articulated on Independence Day. As for Adebhoy being "a lying smile...[with] no personality to know", one would say he simply represents the depth of deception among the leaders Kwame Nkrumah had to work with, and to generalize, the kind of deceitful leaders true revolutionaries have to work with. It also validates some of the draconian measures adopted by these revolutionaries to safeguard the people's freedom as Albert Josiah tries to do in *This Island Now*. Having acquired independence, the leader realises that not everyone is as loyal to the well-being of the country as they profess. In essence this means that the leader loses confidence in his people and their ability to understand the magnitude of the work at hand. In *Dark Days in Ghana* Kwame Nkrumah claims that the people of Ghana understood his plans and were behind him completely except for a few agitators working in conjunction

with imperialists to impede the freedom of Africa.⁷ W.E.F. Ward in *A History of Ghana*⁸ shows that a considerable number of people did not understand what Nkrumah was trying to do and disapproved, especially the cocoa farmers who did not like the fixed prices way before the unrest of 1961. It is of interest to trace how the new leaders or revolutionaries come to power in order to explore the concept of “loss of confidence”. The portrayal of Nkrumah in *A Wreath for Udomo* and *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* is historical in so far as he comes on the scene to harness and channel the revolutionary potential already existent in the people of Ghana. Armah in *The Beautiful Ones are not yet Born* portrays the unrest and the desire by the people to find a leader to help them attain independence. When Nkrumah comes on the scene he is accepted because he articulates well what the people are feeling. This signifies that the leader is still one with the people, he fully understands his people. Unfortunately, in a way, it implies that the people are not very smart and really need someone to guide them. During colonialism the whites were the mentors but once the people realised that there was no pot of gold at the end of the rainbow paraded by the whites they sought a new leader, one of their own. This means that already the leader is regarded as superior in acknowledging opportunities and using them for the good of the people, with their approval. In *A Wreath for Udomo*, Udomo comes at a opportune time and the people accept him because he is educated and speaks in anger against the existing systems, just like the

common people. The leader's confidence in the people is that of a teacher in his students, not as equals from whom one can learn. The logic to the approval of such leadership seems to be: "Europe taught us democracy but it failed while they ruled because they failed to understand us. Our sons who have learnt in Europe the art of ruling must therefore lead us because they can bridge the gap between the two of us." Udomo sees himself as a firebrand, the one chosen to lead his people to freedom. His confidence in the people is only in so far they can give immediate help to further his plans. Selina helps to finance the campaign for independence but that is as far as she is allowed to contribute. The women are forgotten and Selina complains that Udomo no longer tells her his plans as he did when he asked for financial help. There is no suggestion in the novel that African merchants combine to build the economy of Africa after independence. Instead Udomo relies on the whites whom Selina claims have increased in the land than before independence. From this ensues the following dialogue;

"Because we need them, need their skills"

"What of your promise that the land would be free of their rule?" "They don't rule. We rule. You Know that Ade." "I'm not sure of that one," Adebhoy said. "Sure we're the Ministers. The Cabinet is ours. We sign the laws. But white men run all the big industrialization and construction

projects. They control us with their money, and you know it. That's why you shut your eyes to their clubs for whites only. Everywhere in the land, in factories and buildings and construction projects, where roads are being made, whites give the orders and blacks do the work....." (*A Wreath for Udomo*, 1956:229)

This echoes Armah's insistence in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* that nothing has changed,

The sons of the nation were now in charge, after all. How completely the new thing took after the old. (*The Beautiful Ones*, 1968:10)

As already noted, the desire of the leader is to show signs of progress and what could be more viable than improved infrastructure and industries? It therefore becomes imperative that they exist in the new state despite the price one is compelled to pay. The difference with the power-hungry leaders who allow foreigners to dominate so as to line their own pockets is that the patriotic leader really believes in the form of progress he advocates. Kwame Nkrumah allowed foreigners to build industries in Ghana but with conditions that had to be fulfilled, for example, that they would train Ghanaians in the skill that they possessed.

Peter Abrahams in *A Wreath for Udomo* shows the negative side of negotiating. In trying to achieve one thing, one is likely to get one's hands tied in another.

The case of Mhendi clearly outlines this paradox. Udomo wants technicians and financial assistance from the Plurarian whites but they also present conditions attached to their help. In attaching conditions, foreign domination is thus enhanced rather than eradicated which is the explicit aim of independence. The leader, convinced that he needs the whites and has no other way out, is likely to give in on a lot of issues. For example, in *A Wreath for Udomo* the Pan-African vision is sacrificed for the good of the nation [the fourth chapter shall discuss the Pan-African vision in greater detail]. This signifies that the leader lacks confidence in the ability of his people to create their own technology. While it may be argued that this process will take too long and it is like reinventing the wheel, this is not necessarily true. Colonialism brought Africans closer to technology with the rest of the world. The elite trained in various skills would suffice to teach others and help build their nation rather than hiring foreign technicians. As Adebhoy points out, they simply give orders to the blacks who do the work, this implies that there is no learning as one is not given reasons for particular orders but expected to obey. After independence the people are not given the chance to prove what they can or cannot do. Instead development plans are quickly set in place and the people are expected to comply. For instance the development plans in Ghana and Zimbabwe that were pro-socialist.

The governing ideology is that of the Enlightenment period which insists on the linear development of societies through industrialization. The

leaders, as part of the elite, follow these programmes without consulting the masses and hence a great sense of betrayal emerges. The people see the events in their country, judge their position in relation to their expectations and make their conclusions. They are not guided by ideas but by existential evidence as already shown by quotations from *A Wreath for Udomo* and *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* cited above which show that nothing has changed. The effect of this on the leader is that he insists on dictating for the good of the ignorant masses. As a teacher with his students, the leader is the adult who knows better and is forced to be cruel so as to be kind. Kwame Nkrumah, especially after 1961, believed in this concept and the fact that he quotes Richard Wright's letter in his prelude to *Dark Days in Ghana* seems to suggest that it was the principle that motivated him. It is pertinent to discuss the passage in detail at this juncture, which reads:

I say to you publicly and frankly: the burden of suffering that must be borne, impose it upon one generation! Do not, with the false kindness of missionaries and businessman drag out this agony for another five hundred years while your villages rot and your people sink into the morass of a subjective darkness ... Be merciful by being stern! If I lived under your regime, I'd ask for this hardness, this coldness...¹

The leader is called upon to ‘impose’ suffering and guard against his people’s minds sinking into the “morass of a subjective darkness” and encouraged to be hard and cold. Simply he is being asked to be a heartless cold, “benevolent dictator”, oppressing the people for their own good. This is ironic because when the people fought for independence the slogans chanted were repeatedly those of freedom which is here negated. This is an issue that constantly haunts Peter Abrahams. His works insist that the means by which one achieves a goal is just as important as the goal itself. If it is through being hard, how is one to regain softness after the goal is attained?

Anna, Paul and Gubuza in *Wild Conquest* keep admonishing their people for their unwarranted acts of violence. In *A Wreath for Udomo* the strong belief in the success of the revolution as opposed to anything else makes Lanwood and Udomo heartless, sacrificing personal relationships (which are the essence of humanity) in order to serve the revolution. Lanwood stays with Mary because she has the money that can facilitate his writing of revolutionary books. Udomo sacrifices Mhendi for technological development in his country. He also gives up his love relationship with Lois because she is white. In *This Island Now* Albert Josiah controls the judiciary, the press, the civil servants and the merchants “for the good of the country” in the context of a one party state. Nkrumah too, after 1961, imposed sanctions on the press and the judiciary

enabling the opposition to be put in jail as political detainees. In *Dark Days in Ghana* Nkrumah defends the one-party state system.

The one party system of government is now the accepted pattern of government in a large part of independent Africa. But when we were evolving this form it was relatively new, and it was loudly condemned by our enemies. As I told members of the National Assembly in my Sessional Address on 1 February 1966: “A one-party system of government is an effective and safe instrument only when it operates in a socialist society. In other words, it must be political expression of the will of the masses working for the ultimate good and welfare of the people as a whole. On the other hand, a one-party system of government in a neo-colonial client state, subject to external pressure and control, can quickly develop into the most dangerous form of tyranny, deposition and oppression. It can become, in the hands of a few privileged rascally-minded and selfish individuals in a neo-colonial state, a weapon and tool for suppressing the legitimate aspirations of the people in the interest of foreign powers and their agents. I repeat a one-party state can only function for the good of the people within the framework of a socialist programme. The government governs through the people, and not through class cleavages and interests. In the other words, the basis of government is the will of the people.”⁹

The above quotation triggers questions like, accepted by whom? Which people are to be considered since people are not a homogenous entity, they have classes that are defined by various taxonomies? Assuming the “people” refers to the majority of the people in a nation, what is there to stop the party from implementing a programme the leaders feel is for the good of the people and will enhance an ideal which the people have worked for?

This is where the idea of being cruel to be kind comes in. Ward in *A History of Ghana* narrates how

In September 1962, a CPP back bencher moved a resolution in the Assembly in favour of declaring Ghana a one-party state. He declared that in the traditional African way of government, based on chieftainship, there was no scope for an opposition party, and that parliamentary democracy was being ‘misused and misinterpreted’ ... The resolution was opposed by some United Party speakers, but was adopted without division. The Assembly similarly adopted another resolution conferring on Dr. Nkrumah the presidency for life.¹⁰

Ward supports this move and declares that in comparison to the early English parliament

A newly independent African state, faced with tasks of national development far beyond its resources, is in much the same position; there

is no room yet for difference in policy for it is plain to all what needs to be done.¹¹

The problem with the one-party state is that it silences opposition and therefore promotes party interests rather than national interests. As portrayed in *This Island Now*, by silencing the opposition and accusing all criticism of belonging to the opposition, the leadership is cut off from the will of the people it is supposed to be representing. Everything belongs to the ruling party and serves the interests of the party. Albert Josiah dismisses Johnson, the editor of the island newspaper who insists on objectivity, and tells him,

For what we have to do, Mr. Johnson, it is imperative. We cannot as yet afford the kind of press you hold up as a virtue. For us, for our needs, the press must be involved in the struggle to bring into being a completely new pattern of social and economic and political will ... You are primarily concerned with the salvation of your individual soul. I am not that free. Between me and your kind of freedom stands a terrible wall which I and those like me cannot climb until we have achieved the salvation of our racial soul. Till then your concern about your soul is rare and enviable luxury which I recognize longingly and then put behind me. Till then we cannot be individuals in the sense that you are and until we

are, all relations between white and coloured must be counterfeit by definition. (*This Island Now*, 1966:211)

The above quotation is interesting in so far as it points at the idea of the national/racial, or in the other words, ideological will as being more important than the well-being of individuals, who are the people the system purports to serve. Making all institutions play political roles, leads to the attitudes expressed in Armah's works, *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* and *Fragments*, where the media sings praises of the leaders, yet the people cannot see the achievements. They are only acutely aware of the betrayal of their hopes and aspirations by the leaders. Albert Josiah in *This Island Now* deposes of Judge Wright for refusing to co-operate in his scheme to show off his political power and put fear in his opponents. Historically in December 1963 Kwame Nkrumah dismissed the Chief Justice, Sir Arku Korsah, from his post because his ruling had been in favour of people accused of treason. The President sees himself as the symbol of the revolution and becomes a dictator par-excellence by denying fallibility. In *This Island Now* Josiah shouts at Johnson,

I am the President! The President! To insult the President is to insult the land, the nation! Everything! You do not talk man to man to the President. It is not an eight-to-four job. I cannot, like you, go

to town as a private citizen after hours. (*This Island Now*, 1966:212)

Similarly most leaders have decided to control institutions in their countries “for the good of the people.” Dambudzo Marechera in *Mindblast* caricature this phenomenon in the short story where a writer is criticised for not writing “constructively” in the context of Zimbabwe in the early 1980s when the socialist ideology was strongly advocated. This implies that the ideology adopted is the one that determines a course of action of the leadership. It is therefore important to make a comparison between the “traditional African way of government based on chieftainship” and the new one-party state. The old system dealt with smaller numbers of people, usually strengthened by kinship ties that ensured the ruling was just. For instance, Mabi’s mountain society in *A Wreath for Udomo* looks close knit. The whole village comes to welcome him, that is, his age-mates and those younger. In other places kinship ties are strengthened by the use of totems. In the new state such form of leadership becomes defunct as it works against the national interest. Nkrumah comments on this form as a problem in the new Ghana:

I had to combat not only tribalism but the African tradition that man’s first duty was to his family group and that therefore nepotism was the highest of all virtues. While I believe we had

largely eliminated tribalism as an active force, its by-products and those of the family were still with us. I could not have chosen my government without some regard to tribal origins and even, within the Party itself, there was at times a tendency to condemn or recommend some individual on the basis of his tribal or family origin.¹²

In *A Wreath for Udomo*, Mabi is brought from England to join the government especially to represent his tribe, the mountain people. If the people's loyalty is to their families and tribes first, then to the nation, does that not imply that the ideology of the nation is foreign to Africa and therefore its adoption is one of the big mistakes made by the leaders? Basil Davidson in *The Black Man's Burden* insists that

The more one ponders this matter, the more clearly it is seen to arise from the social and political institutions within which decolonised Africans have lived and tried to survive. Primarily, this is a crisis of institutions.

Which institutions? To this the answer is easier. We have to be concerned here with the nationalism which produced the nation-states of newly independent Africa after the colonial period: with the nationalism that became nation-statism. This nation-statism

looked like liberation and really began as one. But it did not continue as liberation in practice, it was not a restoration of Africa to Africa's own history, but the onset of a new period of indirect subjection to the history of Europe. The fifty or so states of the colonial partition, each formed and governed as though their peoples possessed no history of their own, became fifty or so nation states formed and governed on European models, chiefly models of Britain and France. Liberation led to alienation.¹³

The various tribes were divided due to the partition and given to various countries. The old African states were therefore ignored. For instance, the Gaza state was divided between Zimbabwe and Mozambique; the Tonga in the Zambezi valley were divided between Zimbabwe and Zambia; the Venda around Limpopo between Zimbabwe and South Africa. Given that one has relatives across the border, in a situation that requires loyalty to either of the two (the relatives or the nation), which one is one likely to choose? This explains the tribal wars in Africa, like the Hutus versus the Tutsis in Rwanda and Congo. The history of colonialism did not wipe away the suspicions between tribal groups, if anything; they at times sharpened them as members of different groups manipulated the system to hurt their neighbours. In *The Healers* other tribes are shown as readily joining forces with the British in order

to subdue the Asante. In *Wild Conquest* the other tribes join the Afrikaners against the Matabele.

Regionalism is therefore, in a way, positive as it reinforces the old African states and shows the desire by the people to be in total control of their destiny as a unique people, unlike the uniformity insisted upon by the nation. The bitterness is whetted by the fact that the leaders fail to develop the country evenly, and hence the feeling that the people might be able to develop their own areas better if they are allowed autonomy. Like the colonial states, the new governments mainly work on developing the capital city where they reside and where most foreign delegations are received, as a way of proving to the world that they are doing well. The state, therefore, does not work for the good of the people, instead it is a burden they must bear for the sake of global recognition.

Some people learn to manipulate the system for personal gain. In *This Island Now* the rural folk's lives are not affected by the death of Moses Joshua and Albert Josiah's coming into power. They continue eking out their day to day living. The mountain people in *A Wreath for Udomo* continue their rituals, their worldview remains unchanged because they are largely neglected by the ruling leaders. Chiefs remain the recognised leaders among their people and they are active in their people's lives. In *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* Koomson drags himself from the harbour at Takoradi to Accra, the capital, where the big-

shots stay, to make money and a name for himself. If development was even, no one would feel the need to fight so hard to get to the capital city. In Africa the capital cities are heavily populated with unemployed people who flock there hoping for a brighter future.

However adopting the nation state might have seemed the wisest thing to do at the time. As separate tribal entities, the people of Africa failed to ward off conquest by the European powers as seen in the Boer/Matabele war in *Wild Conquest* and the Asante/British war in *The Healers*. Independence was only achieved when they worked together to establish nations. Although this was the way forward pointed out by Europe, to reject it at the cost of continued racial and colonial subjugation would have been unwise as the damage would have been greater. A good leader must always be aware of his options and be able to utilize them. In *Wild Conquest* Moshesh advocates diplomacy and tells Dabula

“When you get back to your land, go at once to Gubuza and give him this message. Tell him that his friend Moshesh commands that he does not fight with these Boers. They have terrible weapons and battle with them is not wise. Tell him I say he must talk with them peacefully, and while he talks with them, I will make a treaty with the English. [...].The English are other white people who are more powerful than the Boers. It is wise to use them...” (*Wild Conquest*, 1951:305-306)

Moshesh's advice is basically that one ought to move with time and change tactics if need be. Europe insisted that for Africans to be allowed to rule themselves, they must be "nations". In West Africa independence was gained mainly by negotiations and strikes. Even in countries in Africa where armed struggle was carried out, there also had to be negotiation with Europe in closing of the chapter of colonialism. Development then dictated that the new countries maintain friendly relations with Europe for economic development. Leaders tried and at times managed to manipulate the Cold War between the western and Eastern bloc. Paul Gifford comments on the situation as follows,

Similarly, the distinction between 'capitalist' and 'socialist' has not proved particularly significant. Much of this labelling was for rhetorical effect during the Cold War. Some of the most statist and centralised regimes, like Mobutu's Zaire, chose to style themselves pro-western and anti-communist but this was a ploy to receive aid. In the peculiar circumstances of the Cold War, it was often sufficient to achieve that aim. Again, there has been little difference between the economic performance of socialist and capitalist regimes. The credit often given to Ivory Coast and sometimes Kenya for their relative economic success owed less to any capitalist orientation than to Houphouet- Boigny's and to a lesser extent Moi's caution in African rising, leaving many key economic positions to skilled expatriates.¹⁴

This is what Udomo does in *A Wreath for Udomo*. He keeps skilled expatriates and keeps the doors for economic aid open. As already noted, this puts him in a tricky position as the donors demand certain conditions to be fulfilled. In *This Island Now* Albert Josiah bargains with the Isaacs Empire which is the most influential local economic force to achieve his ends. This represents what has been called “the myth of aid” which, as noted, is an extension of the problem of adopting the nation state. When Albert Josiah resorts to forced labour for his development projects, presumably because of lack of funds to pay the people, the people riot. Money is important in developing countries. To get aid, a country must be recognized as a sovereign state and must concede some rights to the donor country. Now the role of donor has been taken over by international organisations. This is because

After the Cold War, western nations rapidly wound down their involvement with Africa. ... Western nations came to entrust their decreasing interests to Multinational bodies like the EU, the IFI, the bodies overseeing the home conventions or various United Nations Organisations such as the UNDP, UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP and WHO, much of those work in Africa. More significantly for us many of Africa’s links with West are now through NGOs, whether as providers of famine relief, development aid or residual social services. The Western NGOs

often have greater resources at their disposal than the recipient state itself.¹⁵

This basically means that in trying to join the game of cunning, African leaders have been outwitted by outside forces. Their good intentions have been subverted to have them look like the enemy of their own people. The wrong turns in Africa then turn out to be traps set up by the West at times, and at times due to sickness injected into the elite by colonial education that estranges them from the people. Ideologically bankrupt, the leaders adopt western ideology rather than creating their own while working with their own people.

ENDNOTES

1. Letter to Nkrumah by Richard Wright in Kwame Nkrumah, *Dark days in Ghana*, Panaf books, London, 1968.
2. Cheikh Hamidou Kane, *Ambiguous Adventure*, (translated by Katherine Woods), Heinemann, Nairobi, 1963,
3. Neil Lazarus, "Pessimism of the Intellect, Optimism of the will: a reading of Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*" in *Research in African Literatures*, Volume 28, number 4, Winter 1997, pp12-20
4. Ibid
5. Kolawole Ogungbesan, "the Politics of *This Island Now*" in *The Journal of Common Wealth Literatures*, Volume VIII, number 1, June 1973, pp33-41.

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6. Michael Wade, *Peter Abrahams*, Evans Brothers Ltd, London, 1972.
 7. Kwame Nkrumah, *Dark Days in Ghana*, Panaf Books, London, 1968.
 8. W.E.F. Ward, *A History of Ghana*, (2nd edition), George Allen & Unwin Ltd, London, 1967.
 9. Kwame Nkrumah, *Opcit*
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 11. Ibid
 12. Kwame Nkrumah, *Opcit*
 13. Basil Davidson, *The Black Man's Burden: Africa and the Curse of the Nation State*, James Currey, London, 1992.
 14. Paul Gifford, *African Christianity: Its Public Role*, Hurst & co. Ltd, London, 1998.

CHAPTER THREE

MESSIANIC APPROACH TO LIBERATION

For unto us a child is born, unto us a child is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful Counsellor, The Everlasting father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of the government and peace there shall be no end, ... and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgement and with justice from hence forth even forever. The zeal of the lord of hosts will perform this.

Isaiah 9:6-7

Having looked at the ideological bankruptcy of the leader in the previous chapter, I now turn to the led themselves. This chapter argues that the wrong turns are not necessarily due to the leader's failure but due to wrong perceptions on the part of the led. They looked up to the leader as a Messiah sent by God to liberate them from their miseries and hence endowed with powers to work miracles. In their leaders they saw a Prometheus bringing fire from the gods.

The problem seems to be inherently African as evidenced by the epics existing on the great leaders of Africa, for example, *Sundiata, Epic of Mali*.¹ Sundiata's birth and life is predestined by the gods and various forms of magic are used to

help him achieve his destiny. Sundiata is a great leader who restores peace to the land by defeating a cruel leader. The people expect the same of post-colonial leaders as in this case the cruel leaders are the colonialists. A personality cult is therefore built around the leader based on the conviction of divine intervention, be it the Christian God or ancestral spirits. In this context, it becomes easy to view the leader as being infallible and hence the various names given to the leader. In *The Healers* Asamoa Nkwanta is called Osagyefo, father of the nation, Safra Khan, the soul of the army and all the high names of praise. There is an indication that his role is divinely appointed as evidenced by the vision he has when he abandons the army. The Asante army itself begins to disintegrate as none of the Captains can command it. The well being of the army and consequently of Asante (the army is the guardian of Asante) rests on Asamoa Nkwanta's shoulders. The Asantehene recognizes this and sabotages the General's plans to free his people from the threat imposed by the British. *Wild Conquest* presents Mzilikazi as

Mzilikazi the great, Lord of the Leopard and the Lion, master of the elephant, king of the mountains and the valleys, eater of the jackal, destroyer of his enemies, protector of his friends. (*Wild Conquest*, 1951: 170)

His power is portrayed as being infallible and one can easily draw parallels with the description of God in the Bible especially the Psalms. Given this background of how traditional leaders were perceived it is natural that the people expected their leaders after independence to follow the same vein. *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* and *A Wreath for Udomo* present Nkrumah's arrival on the political scene as being timely, when everyone was ready for him.

The promise was so beautiful. Even those who were too young to understand knew that at last something good was being born. It was there.

We were not deceived about that. (*The Beautiful Ones*, 1968:85)

The same confidence and conviction is seen in *A Wreath for Udomo*. The moment he arrives on the scene in England, everything speeds up. Everyone recognizes that he is the 'spark' they have been lacking. They are certain Udomo will lead Panafrica to freedom and so Mhendi gives him the instructions to help him attain freedom for Pluralia. On the boat to Panafrica, Selina recognizes Udomo as the messiah and tells him,

"You are different to all of us. And you do not speak much. But when you speak we all listen. And we feel the anger that is in you" ... "Do not forget the women then, Mr Udomo ... When you have started, and when I can see what it is you are doing, come to me and I will speak for you with

the women of the market. My name is Selina. Remember it. And do not forget the women.” (*A Wreath for Udomo*, 1956:127-8)

This reminds one of the thief that was crucified with Jesus and asked to be remembered When Jesus entered his kingdom. Similarly Selina and Mhendi ask to be remembered in Udomo’s political kingdom. Kwame Nkrumah believed that one should seek first the political kingdom and all other things will follow. Udomo gets a large following because he writes the truth about the dock strikes. He is more popular while in prison as he points out to Selina,

“ No matter what happens, you are not to pay any fine. I must stay I jail and serve my time. Your duty will be to keep up the anger of the people and to build up a party that would lead them to freedom. Don’t you see Selina, in jail I would be the rallying point of our people. Are you with me?” (*A Wreath for Uddomo*, 1956: 153)

The idea of a leader suffering for his people is messianic. The people acknowledge this suffering and rally behind the leader just as Christians rally behind Jesus. Kwame Nkrumah was arrested for political reasons before his party won the elections and he came out of prison to take his seat in government. Nelson manila of South Africa was in jail for many years and remained the stalwart base of the South African revolution. Many other leaders went to prison in their various countries for political reasons. The self sacrifice

involved in accepting imprisonment for the sake of the people's freedom elevates the leader in the minds of the people in relation to his messianic role of saving them. This also accounts for the strong belief in the infallibility of the leader. At times the leaders themselves share in this belief and hence the heroic feats grow out of this conviction. Udomo never has any doubts as to the outcome of the revolution he is to lead. At the Commonwealth conference Udomo declares,

“We will not fail! Even if there is a sea of blood! We will not fail! Now! You have been warned! We will not fail!” He stood like that for a long time: clenched fist high above his head, aware of the faces turned to him, aware of the great silence in the hall, aware too, now, of the violent trembling of his body in the great silence. Then he sat down suddenly, utterly spent. (*A Wreath for Udomo*, 1956:76)

Udomo's words here are given a prophetic feel and the bodily reactions described are reminiscent of the ancient cultic prophets as the spirit left them after uttering a prophecy. Udomo feels that it is his destiny to free Africa and he is compelled to fulfil it. The element of the supernatural, cannot be ruled out as evidenced by Udomo's prayer on his way back to Panafrika:

Mother Africa! Oh, Mother Africa, make me strong for the work that I must do. Don't forget me in the many that you nurse. I would make you

great. I would have the world respect you and your children. I would have the sun of freedom shine over you once more. It was for this that I left you for so long and lived in strange lands among strange people and suffered and was abused and was cold and hungry. It was in order to come back and free you, to free all your children and to make you great among those who now look down upon you. They do not understand your dark ways. For them you are something to be exploited, and your children creatures to be held down. Now this must end. I will end it if you help me. I cannot see you but I can feel you in the dark. Tomorrow I will be with you, in you. Do not let me get lost in your many. Help me, watch me. My name is Michael Udomo. Do not forget it. Michael Udomo, the instrument of your freedom.....(*A Wreath for Udomo*,1956:122-3)

What is worrying in the above quotation is the insistence on the singular 'I' in Udomo's declarations of what he will do. The effect is to concentrate power into his own hands and make all others irrelevant except as objects through which Udomo can demonstrate his power. Freedom becomes a one-man show. This also implies that Udomo's power is from above, imposed on the people and they only accept it because they see no other way. In this context the overdependence on one leader is explained; the people depend on him not just as another human being, but as one with a touch of the supernatural. How then

can a simple human being reproach a demi-god? This tends to isolate the leader from those he works with and the masses in general.

The messianic approach to leadership focuses on the personality of the leader, forgetting that he works with other people. The leaders are given high praise names such as “Osagyefo”, Father of the nation. However, the nation is far much bigger than a family unit and the ‘father’s’ administration has to pass through many channels who might twist the benevolent father’s orders to serve their own ends. For instance, many books that have been written on Kwame Nkrumah vouch for his sincerity but corruption was rampant within his regime as portrayed by Armah in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*. In *Dark Days of Ghana* Nkrumah writes;

Right from the foundations of the Party, as everyone in Ghana knows, I have waged a ceaseless war against corruption. In the “Dawn Broadcast” made on 8th April 1961, I stressed the need to eliminate it from our society: I am aware that the evil of patronage find a good deal of place in our society. I consider that it is entirely wrong for persons placed in positions of eminence or authority to use the influence of office in patronising others, in many cases wrong persons, for immoral favours. I am seeing to it that this evil shall be uprooted, no matter whose ox is gored. The same thing goes for nepotism, which is, so to speak, a twin

brother of the evil patronage ... it is most important to remember that the strength of the Convention People's Party derives from the masses of the people. These men and women include those whom I have constantly referred to as the unknown warriors- dedicated men and women who serve the party loyally and selflessly without hoping for reward. It is therefore natural for the masses to feel some resentment when they see comrades whom they have put in power and have given the mandate to serve the country on their behalf, begin to forget themselves and indulge in ostentatious living. High Party Officials, Ministries, Ministerial Secretaries, Chairmen of Statutory boards and corporations must forever bear this in mind. Some of us very easily forget that we ourselves have risen from amongst the masses.²

One man cannot work against a crowd, the majority always succeed in setting the standard. The few genuine leaders are therefore swamped by the self-seekers and hence the disillusionment in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*:

It may be terrible to think that this was that all the speeches, all the hope, all the love of the first days was for. It is terrible, but it is not a lie. Who can blame them when in this society there is no way of knowing whether anything else is possible? If they found the only way they could escape from us, mount above us, was by first talking like brothers, who are the

fools? There was something so good about the destroyed waking up and wanting to make themselves whole again. There was so much that was heart-filling about the friendships and hopes of the first days. So it should be easy now to take the rot of the promise. It should be easy now to see that there have never been people to save anybody but themselves, never in the past, never now, and there will never be any saviours, if each will not save himself. No saviours. Only the hungry and the fed. (*The Beautiful Ones*, 1968:90)

This shows that the concept of a saviour does not work at all, people need to work together. Unfortunately the people Nkrumah worked with (as happened with other genuine leaders) had their own agendas; to grow rich and enjoy the best in life at the expense of the masses. Kwame Nkrumah established Winneba, the ideological school to enable those that he worked with understand his vision and what they were working towards. Unfortunately those that were interested in serving themselves turned it into a joke. Koomson regards the school as one of the hardships a Minister has to endure and relates the following story.

Some people think being a Minister is all good-time. Heh, heh, sometimes I wish I had been a businessman instead. One day they brought a man to give the Ministers and the Parliamentarians and the Party activists a lecture. That was during the Winneba days. The man had many

degrees, and he was very boring. In the first place he was dressed like a poor man ... And for a long time he spoke to us about economics. They say he was telling us how to make poor countries rich. Something called stages of growth. I have tried to find out what he really said but it seems I wasn't the only one who slept that day. I woke up when I heard some clapping. Then others woke up and we all clapped and said, "Yeah, Yeah". Then the Attorney General, who is one of our Party scholars, got up to give the vote of thanks. "You have told us, Professor So and so, of the stages of growth. We thank you very much for having told us your speciality." The Attorney General swayed being drunk as usual went on. "Now we will share our special knowledge here with you. We present ...the stages of booze!" I tell you, no one was going back to sleep. The Attorney General opened his red eyes from time to time and chanted!

"Stage One- the Mood Jucose

Stage Two- The Mood Morose

Stage Three- The Mood Bellicose

Stage Four- The Mood Lachrymose

Stage Five- The mood Comatose"

Then the Attorney General fell down. He was in the final stage himself.

We all said, “yaaaah yeah.” It was a fine day indeed.’ (*The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, 1968:132-133)

What strikes the reader is how these self-serving ministers gloat in their ideological bankruptcy. They promote a culture of consuming but do not want to learn what to preach. They despise the poor but do not want to learn how to make their countries rich, so that they in turn will not be despised by the developed countries. The failure of the Winneba scheme is therefore not because it was wrong, but because of the attitude of those it was designed to serve. A common feature on most national televisions in Africa is of Ministers dozing during parliamentary debates thus echoing Koomson’s sentiments that the whole procedure is boring.

However in *This Island Now* Albert Josiah manages to induce a sense of seriousness and responsibility in his ministers during a Cabinet study-class when Richard Young, Minister of Youth and Community Affairs shows lack of knowledge of his Ministry by referring all questions to his Permanent Secretary.

When he finished and sat down, obviously pleased with himself, Josiah had questioned him, quietly, coldly, in devastating detail till it was plain to all present that Mr. Young had only the haziest notion of the structure and workings of his Ministry. Then Josiah had said: ‘A teacher must

prove qualification before he or she is permitted to teach our children, a doctor before he can heal the sick; the people under you Mr. Minister, your Permanent Secretary and the lowliest established civil servant in your Ministry have had to prepare themselves for their jobs, have proven fitness ... Fitness for the job is the least we should expect of you, of all of us. If I were as ignorant of my job I would resign!’ (*This Island Now*, 1966: 157-158)

The above quotation shows that at times a Messianic leader can instil changes in his Ministers but situations do not always permit. Kwame Nkrumah admits to having accepted some people into his government simply because their people voted for them, though he knew they were not fit for the job.³ The idea of study classes implies that all others who work with the leader lack ideology and it is the duty of the leader to instil it in them. The problem again becomes that of overdependence on the infallibility of one man. This explains Albert Josiah’s failure. All he says is endorsed and his followers refuse to listen to anything that contradicts Josiah’s ideas. Judge Wright asks what they will do if their programmes fail to which Simpson answers,

‘I can’t answer a question based on the supposition of failure. I don’t think we’ll fail. He is not that kind of man.’

‘We are all “that kind of man” young man. For each one of us one final failure is certain, many of us experience many before we get to that final one. Let me tell you one thing. I am not as hostile to your changes as you think. What I fear is for the land and for the people, is the way in which the President destroys the way back to where he started from each time he takes a step forward. We need to be able to retrace our steps if we get lost or suffer defeat. And we talk about the interests of the majority. How do we know what those interests are? How are they expressed after he has destroyed all opposition and criticism? And how do the people remove him if the day ever comes when they want to get rid of him? These are the things that worry me, young man. And it worries me that you, the people around the President accept him as infallible.’ (*This Island Now*, 1966:231-232)

So apart from the self serving ministers, the others are blindly loyal to the ‘messiah’ like Simpson. They look at the world in binary terms; you are either with the president or against him just as in Christian terms one is either for Christ or for the Devil. The loyal ministers propose that the leader be President for life and help thwart all opposition in the name of the party and the people. This normally happens when the leader has been in power for many years and the situation in the country seems to be getting worse instead of better as the people were promised at independence. Coups are therefore born out of the

messianic approach to leadership. After all other avenues of democracy have been closed, only the army is left to save the people as exemplified in Sembene's *The Last of the Empire* and *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*. The other texts also portray violence as the way out, for instance, the tribal ritual in *A Wreath for Udomo* and the attempted assassination in *This Island Now*.

For the masses who have no access to guns and military strategies, the solution lies in looking for personal saviours. This idea is clearly illustrated in Armah's second novel, *Fragments*. Baako Onipa's script written for Ghanavision is called *The Brand*, a title adopted from Doctor Aggrey who said "I am a brand plucked from the burning." The script castigates the elite for failing to save their people. Instead they regard the people "as some kind of devils in a burning hell, and themselves as the happy plucked ones, saved." (*Fragments*, 1969:147-148). Once the people realise that they have been betrayed they seek salvation from their own family members. They see that the elite enjoy the fruits of the nation and hence they aspire that one of their own joins the elite. They make sacrifices knowing that in the future they shall be rewarded. Baako's dilemma, like that of the man in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, is that he cannot join the corruption and sin against his soul. He therefore abdicates his role as Messiah. The incantations made to the ancestors before Baako leaves for New York expresses the family's desires:

There are no humans born alone.

You are a piece of us,

Of those gone before

And who will come again

A piece of us, go

And come a piece of us.

You will not be coming,

When you come,

The way you went away

You will come back stronger

To make us stronger

Wiser,

To guide us with wisdom

[.....]

Do not be persuaded you will fill your stomach faster if you do not
have other to fill.

There are no humans who walk this earth alone.

(*Fragments*, 1969:4)

Critics who have commented on this passage have emphasized the issue of wholeness and cyclical nature of life. However I see an insistence on the unity of the family that is sending Baako away, expecting him to come back and make them rich, so they hope to benefit from his going away. Baako is to “come stronger” and make the family “stronger”. As noted the stronger of the time are the rich, they have power to command because of material wealth. Those that die come back stronger as ancestral spirits. In the same way, Baako likens his going away to death in the script on the cargo cult;

At any rate it is clearly understood that the been-to has chosen, been awarded, a certain kind of death. A beneficial death, since the cargo follows his return. Not just cargo, but also importance, power, a radiating influence capable of touching ergo elevating all those who in the first instance have suffered the special bereavement caused by the been-to’s going away.... In many ways the been-to cum ghost is and has to be a transmission belt for cargo. Not a maker, but an intermediary. Making takes too long, the intermediary brings quick gains. The gaining circle is narrower, it is true, but with rock bottom realism inherent in the system the

close ones find nothing strange in it. It is life. (*Fragments*, 1969:157)

The attitude becomes that if the family is saved, then all is fine. The aim is not to change the system but to find ways of survival by joining the system of consumption. Naana complains that people are sacrificed

To satisfy perhaps a new god they have found much like the one that began the same long destruction of our people when the elders first- may their souls never find forgiveness on this head- split their own seed and raised half against half, part selling part to hard eyed buyers from beyond the horizon, breaking, buying, selling, gaining, spending till the last of our men sells the last woman to any passing white buyer and himself awaits to be destroyed by this great haste to consume things we have taken no care nor trouble to produce. (*Fragments*, 1969:199)

The above quotation comments on the growth of consumerism from the days of slavery to recent times when men sell women into prostitution for the sake of money and gadgets of the West. The notion of salvation for the people has come to mean the amount of cargo one possesses and is capable of accumulating. Brempong is considered to have made it as he fulfils the aspirations of his family. Every time he goes away he brings back cargo which confirms the status of his family. His clothes are from Britain, his cigarette lighter from

Amsterdam, two cars from the Germany factory, a wallet from Morocco. His arrival at the airport becomes an occasion to flaunt the family's power and money. Brempong's sister pours champagne on his shoes, spreads expensive glittering cloth on the asphalt leading to the back door of a limousine as a carpet for Brempong to step on. She is condescending to the poor people who have come to greet Brempong and shouts,

“Move back, you villagers,” she said pushing hard against those in her way. “Don't come and kill him with your T.B. He has just returned, and if you don't know, let me tell you. The air where he has been is pure, not like ours. Give him space. Let him breathe!” (*Fragments*, 1969:59)

This new type of Messiah that people opt for only helps to fragment society further. The tribal links are rendered ineffective as the family is venerated. Old associations are therefore cut off. The man in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* observes that since his rise to power, Koomson only comes to his home for help on the fishing boat deal and when he needs help to escape from the new rulers. The family institution itself has been distorted to the extent that it does not care for its members except if they are useful in bringing cargo. Naana is considered a nuisance and ignored. This brings another angle to the messianic approach to leadership.

If Baako, as positive elite with a social vision, is the leader, how can he bring salvation to people who consider him insane for not joining the game of consuming? The leader in such a situation is similar to the protagonist of the myth of Plato's cave as told by Teacher in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*.

A story of impenetrable darkness and chains within a deep hole, holding people who for ages had seen nothing outside the darkness of their shadowy forms had no way of believing there could be anything else. And out of these, one unfortunate human being is able at last to break from the chains and to wander outward from the eternal circle of the lightless cave, and to see the blinding beauty of all the lights and colours of the world outside. With the eagerness of the first bringer the wanderer returns to the cave and its eternal darkness, and in there he shares what he has, the ideas and the words and images of the light and the colours of the world outside, knowing surely that those he had left behind would certainly want the snapping of the ancient chains and the incredible first of seeing the light and the colours of the world beyond the cave. But to those inside the eternal cave, he came as someone driven ill with the breaking of the eternal boundaries, and the truth he sought to tell was nothing but the proof of his long delusion, and the words he had to give were the pitiful cries of a madman lost in the mazes of a mind pushed too

far out and away from the everlasting way of darkness and reassuring chains.

After each telling of the story the teller would ask, as if he had been speaking to the air, why men should stand apart and disappoint themselves when people free to choose, choose what they want? (*The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, 1968:80)

In this context then, the problem of Africa is not necessarily the leaders but the led, who would like to continue manipulating the western system rather than developing their own countries so that they become autonomous states. The leader as Messiah then brings the wrong message and plan compared to the one the people are looking for. Consequently he is rejected, those that voted for him denounce him for failing to fulfil their hopes and aspirations.

With a consumerist culture growing in Africa, its problems will continue unresolved. Instead of searching for Messiahs to lead them, the people must change their attitudes and aim at working together to build nations. Leaders too must realise that they are not messiahs and need to work with the people and not to dictate what ought to be done. The leaders must not hide their lack of ideology behind a façade of mysticism based on the conviction of supernatural appointment.

END NOTES

1. D.T. Niane, *Sundiata, an epic of Old Mali*, Longman, London, 1965.
2. Kwame Nkrumah, *Dark Days in Ghana*, Panaf Books, London, 1968, p68.
3. Ibid, p66.

CHAPTER FOUR

PAN-AFRICAN VISION

A free Africa makes a freer Black Man everywhere. So the centre of concentration to free all is nowhere but in Africa. One must be a fighter.

Africa is the Black Man's Private Property and trespassers will be dealt with. This time we won't be grinning our teeth.

Josie Wallen 20 September 1968 (Canadian of African descent)

The previous chapter have looked at the effects of lack of ideology on the part of African leaders and the various positions they have adopted in leading their people. Now I turn to an ideology that was popular in the 1960s in the context of empowering black people. This chapter examines how viable the idea is and argues that, to a larger extent, it has failed because Africa is not homogeneous.

On an ideological and intellectual level Pan-Africanism is a great and noble idea but difficult (if not impossible) to put in practice. Kwame Nkrumah strongly believed in Pan- Africanism and while in exile in Conakry admitted that for him "the issue of African unity came before any other consideration."² Betrayal of the national concerns at times becomes a necessity.

Pan-Africanism argues that all Africans, (i.e Africans on the continent and in the diaspora) must unite and reclaim their sovereignty in the world as opposed to years of oppression and degradation they have experienced at the hands of whites. One of its aims then is to restore racial pride. In 1859 Dr. Martin Robinson Delaney declared, “The claims of no people are respected until they are presented in a national capacity.”³ The early African nationalists (Blyden, Horton and Casely Hayford to name a few) therefore aimed at turning Africa into a recognized nation, their first achievement being the unification of West Africa in lobbying for their rights. Some Africans of the Diaspora also looked to Africa for salvation and looked forward to a day of return. Ethiopia, the only African state that had not been colonised, became a bastion of prestige and hope to thousands of Africans especially those in America and the West Indies who were taunted by the whites for the absence of any substantial collective achievement by their race and the inability of members of their race to rule themselves. After the battle of Adowa in 1895, Ethiopia became emblematic of African valour and resistance.⁴ Orlando Patterson’s *The Children of Sysphus* presents members of the Rastafarian sect waiting for a boat to take them back to Africa, to Ethiopia. In the United States of America in the 1920s the Jamaican, Marcus Garvey, organised to take willing African-Americans back to Africa in his Black Starline. What is important to note is that Pan-Africanism as an

ideology grew out of the racism Africans were subjected to either through slavery or colonialism.

Of James Africanus Horton we are told,

What may have influenced Horton's pan-African thought more than anything else during his student days in Britain and , certainly, after his return home was the emergence of pseudo-scientific thought in Europe and America which interpreted society in terms of fixed racial categories in which the Negro was assigned a very low place, and its concomitant of Euro-American racial prejudice towards the black man, of which Horton had plenty of experience when he went to Africa as a fully qualified doctor and Army officer, and which he might have had to endure, at least occasionally during his student days in England and Scotland.⁵

Edward W. Blyden, who was a West Indian of African descent, briefly lived in the United States of America and then in 1851 emigrated to Liberia to secure a better education which was denied him in America due racism:

At a period when the educated inhabitants of the British West African colonies were becoming conscious of their own achievement and looking forward to self-government, he made them aware of their affinities not only with transatlantic Negroes but with inhabitants of the vast continent

inland. Then Blyden can be seen as the forerunner of the Pan-African movement.⁶

Kwame Nkrumah, also became active in Pan-Africanist activities during his student days abroad. W.E.F. Ward writes,

Long before he returned to Africa to become Dr. Danquah's party secretary, Dr. Nkrumah had become devoted to the cause of African unity, or pan-Africanism: he had attended conferences and had been secretary of the organisation established to follow up the conference's decision when he came to power in an independent Ghana, he hoped that Ghana would be the nucleus around which an African union or federation would grow.⁷

Before independence the people of Africa had one common enemy, colonialism, and it was easier to unite and fight against the colonial powers. Unfortunately the divisions were already there as pointed out in *A Wreath for Udomo*. On being introduced to Udomo, Adebhoy says,

“Heard of you from one of those fellows who call themselves Frenchmen. Told me about the strike you tried to lead.” The laughter-lines near his eyes deepened. “Said you didn’t understand they were not oppressed colonials but Frenchmen enjoying all the rights of Frenchmen! Ha, ha ha”
(*A Wreath for Udomo*, 1956:21)

The French colonial subjects decided to side with France rather than Africa thus making Pan-Africanism difficult to achieve. It is not surprising that in choosing between self government and being part of a large French federation, out of all French colonies, Guinea is the only one that opted for independence. With the withdrawal of French services, Guinea would have been pushed into relinquishing independence but Ghana provided financial assistance. Guinea and Ghana became the first two states involved in a pact aimed at engineering the formation of the United States of Africa.

Ayi Kwei Armah also believes in the Pan-African vision and hopes that one day it will be achieved. When he left America for Algeria, he wanted to play a role in liberating Africa. Like Fanon, he felt,

Africa's first crisis, she will have to decide whether to go forward or backward. She must understand that it is no longer possible to advance in regions, that, like a great body that refuses any mutilation, she must advance in totality, that there will not be one Africa that fights against colonialism and another that attempts to make arrangements with colonialism.⁸

However what he saw in Algeria disillusioned him. Instead of unity he saw divisions widened in terms of class, and the elite being only armchair revolutionaries doing nothing to change the system, if anything helping to

entrench it deeper. This situation is presented in *Why Are We So Blest?* His later novels, *Two Thousand Seasons* and *The Healers* point out that the problem lies in lack of understanding of history and they insist that all black people were once one people dwelling together, separated by migrations due to various reasons. The call is for all people coming together again to complete the cycle Naana in *Fragments* insists on. The aim of the healers led by Damfa is to unite all blacks without using force but inspiration.

Kwame Nkrumah can be seen as a Damfa with his unwavering faith in Pan-Africanism and the socialist doctrine through which he hoped to achieve a classless society. He believed that there is

No better unifying symbol for the Africans and people of African descent everywhere than the African revolution- the goal of which is a united Africa under a socialist All-African Union Government and the emancipation of the entire black world.

Until Africa is free and politically united, we are without power or status, and can only reach very limited objectives either in Africa or in the U.S.A.⁹

The limited achievements at the time of writing were the formation of the Organisation of African Unity (O.A.U.) whose main agenda was to promote the independence of African states. Since there were no United African states to

define new boundaries, the states that were defended were those created by the partition of Africa. In 1969, only six years after the O.A.U. was formed, Nkrumah was already complaining that;

To argue that the O.A.U. should be supported is to evade the issue, and make nonsense of your own admission, that socialist revolution in Africa can only be brought about by forceful means. The OAU has become a puppet organisation in the hands of the neo-colonialists and imperialists, and has neither the organisational machinery nor the will to conduct a revolutionary war. The meagre and grudging efforts of the Liberation Committee of the OAU clearly show this. Yet we see the effort put in the recent Pan-African cultural festival in Algiers!

Certainly, imperialists and neo-colonialists and indigenous reactionary forces welcome platforms of protest such as the OAU. But the action, not protest, is what is needed. Progressive forces of the world have seen the uselessness of non-violent protest, and have begun to employ the use of force.¹⁰

This means that African unity has become a force which sidelines important issues for entertainment. Cultural festivals are venerated above freeing Africa from colonial rule. There is a hint of such frivolity at the end of *The Healers* when the old woman celebrates that the white man has done a healer's job by

bringing Africans of different tribes and those of the Diaspora together. The underlying aim is to show that all black people are the same as they dance to the same music in the same fashion.

However this might also be a pointer to the conflict of the national and the Pan-African agendas. Independent nations need to assert their cultures over the colonial one that has oppressed them for many years, however staunch Pan-Africanists expect them to keep talking of removing the colonialists physically, an aspect these nations have already achieved. As seen in *A Wreath for Udomo*, a leader has to choose between enhancing freedom in his own country or remaining in a static position for the sake of a neighbouring country. Udomo's problem is that;

Prime Ministers don't aid revolutionaries from neighbouring countries, especially if they are dependent on those countries for capital and skill. (*A Wreath for Udomo*, 1956:207)

Mhendi realises the change in his colleagues and nurses,

They've changed. Only I am still the same. And now they are more like me. But they have power. Their problem is of how to build, of how to create. Only mine are still those of how to destroy. (*A wreath for Udomo*, 1956:279)

It is difficult to reconcile the differences and in Udomo's case he is forced to choose the national goal over the Pan-African one. *A Wreath for Udomo* is a prophetic book written in 1956, based on Kwame Nkrumah. Historically Nkrumah diverted from Peter Abrahams' prophecy. Instead of pursuing the national interest over the Pan-African one, Kwame Nkrumah prioritised the latter in his agenda. Consequently he became more popular outside his country than he was in Ghana as portrayed in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*. The people are convinced that the government is not doing anything for them and hence resort to taking bribes to save their families from starving. *Fragments* shows expatriates being given preference over "sons of the soil".

In 1961 there was a flood in Somalia and Nkrumah gave financial assistance. The President of the Somali Agriculturalist Co-operation, after the 1966 coup, wrote to Nkrumah saying,

Our Agricultural Co-operative was facing disaster at the time of the 1961 flood, but you saved us and made it possible for us to exist and face the future by granting us the vitally needed assistance, which was 3,000. From that day, the people of Somalia came to know you better, and also Ghana and Ghanaians. From that day, we understood that you are a genuine African leader; because we arrived just out of the 'blue', but when we told you about our difficulties, you never doubted us, and you

helped us at a time when a person clearly distinguished between friends and foes.¹¹

Kwame Nkrumah received many such letters of gratitude in Conakry. It is difficult to reconcile the disparity between this great generous, open-minded Pan-African leader and the inefficient, paranoid leader in Ghana. W.E.F. Ward writes:

There was much disillusionment and discontent in Ghana. The country had entered on its independence with a comfortable reserve of some 220 million. In eight years, this had been nearly all spent. The country was so desperately short in foreign exchange that the manager of a mine eagerly welcomed the gift of a packet of razor-blades, and one of the country's biggest hospitals had only two thermometers. The prices of all food-stuff, whether imported or homegrown, had risen enormously and there was much suffering among the poor. The economic distress was intensified by the atmosphere of terror, everyone was afraid of being denounced as an informer and whisked away to a concentration camp as an enemy of the state. Public opinion had been shocked by the dismissal of the four judges. Dr. Nkrumah's political opponents were in prison or in exile, and many of the country's best men, those not active in politics, preferred to leave the country and make their careers overseas. Nkrumah himself no

longer mingled with the crowds and became more and more invisible. In the early days many would tell of how they had put their troubles direct to Nkrumah and had obtained quick justice from his personal intervention; now he was hidden behind a thick screen of people who made it their business to see that no one ever got access to him.¹²

The pattern here is familiar among African leaders and partly accounts for the numerous military coups. Nkrumah sacrificed national interests for the Pan-African vision and hence his own people were disillusioned. In the economic hardships, while his people battled for each day's meal, Nkrumah continued to finance Pan African agendas. He cut himself from the people so as not to be disturbed or assassinated at the command of imperialist forces as he put it. Most African leaders are quick to talk of imperialist plotting or subversive action once a group of people express their dissatisfaction with existing conditions. They expect everyone to agree with them.

In neglecting the national concerns Nkrumah reaped the people's anger and hence the coup of 1966. Nkrumah insisted that the masses were still behind him and wanted him back, they had nothing to do with the coup. This might be true as evidenced by *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, the people have nothing to do with the coup and are not moved, they go on with their daily routines. We are told;

The streets were very quiet. Only here and there a small group of men would be talkin, and it did not seem necessarily true that they were talking of things that had taken place this day. At the bus stop people were talking, but in truth nobody knew anything except that there had been a change, and the words merely repeated the talker's first astonishment, then endless questions about who the new men were, what they were going to do, what they had been doing all along. There were no answers to any of these questions, though one man who reeked of drink and vomit claimed that this was all a plan of the devilish Nkrumah, to bring everyone out in the streets and have his soldiers and his policemen catch them all and lock them up, as he had done before. ... Otherwise there was nothing really unusual except perhaps that there was more silence around, as if, in a rare moment, people all busy thinking and had no time or no desire to fill the air with the usual noises of life. (*The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, 1968:159)

One of the reasons given for the coup is that the soldiers feared being sent to Vietnam and Rhodesia to help fight the colonialist. Nkrumah and the C.P.P have denied this claim. However, soldiers had been sent to the Congo before and this therefore gave the soldiers a premise on which to base their conclusion. The main implication of sending soldiers to fight elsewhere is that the main breadwinner is removed from his family and the suffering of the family in

question is increased especially if the soldier dies. This has been the case in Zimbabwe since the conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo (D.R.C) started. People resented this move but soldiers were sent there. Rumours among the people claimed it was because the President has business interests in the DRC. However it is all a matter of principle, in the Pan-African spirit. Laurent Kabila ousted Mobutu Seseseko, an imperialist puppet par-excellence, the SADC members with armies in the DRC are therefore defending the honour and integrity of Africa. They are also supposedly maintaining the “peace and order” by putting down the ‘rebels’.

The Pan-African idea is defeated on two levels. First , the “rebels” are also African and killing them does not promote peace and unity, instead it promotes resentment and disunity. If the ‘rebels’ are defeated they are likely to keep the peace while they regain their strength for revenge. Secondly, by going against the will of the people in a nation, national disunity is created, a further fragmentation of the whole and renders hope of African unity infantile. Frantz Fanon in *Toward the African Revolution* argues that,

The African countries for their part committed a mistake by their willingness to send their troops to be neutralized and without suspecting it, they were allowing others to do their work.¹³

It might be true that by allowing the United Nations to be the main peace keeper, Africans are letting the dominant Western powers do their work, yet the latter always have their own special interests to protect. However there is also evidence that Pan Africanism as an ideology has failed and nations have decided to recognize their sovereignty as states and join the United Nations as an international forum within which they can play their role in the global context. In so doing their activities are not limited to Africa but open to the whole world. In this way Africans all over the world can easily relate without relinquishing their national identities. Martha Lee in *This Island Now* says,

You know, for us who are coloured and who are of the Western world, who live in the western world, only this chain of islands is home. Once we leave these islands we are outsiders. We're outsiders in continental Africa, in Europe, in Asia. Our ancestors came from these great land masses but they are no longer home to us. And so we're outsiders even among those who look like us but who are not of these islands. I think this is true for even the white skinned islanders. We are a new breed, a kind of outpost of the future trapped here in the twentieth century. (*This Island Now*, 1966:181)

Basically the experiences of Africans all over the world are different. To insist on a socialist vision, as Nkrumah did, is to reject Africans with other ideas.

Kwame Nkrumah sniggered at Kenneth Kaunda in one of his letters. “Imagine him talking of humanism as an ideology for Zambia. He is nuts there.”¹⁴ I however think it is a more viable solution to unity as one simply has to acknowledge the humanity of the other and work towards uniting despite all other differences. The problem presented in Peter Abrahams’ *The View from Coyaba* would not exist. It is based on Idi Amin’s nationalising or rather Africanising scheme. Jacob Brown is not allowed to stay because he is not a real African, he is American. The Asians are harassed and their businesses taken from them without compensation though they were born in the country and have known no other home. Race as a defining parameter for nationality does not work anymore in the new world. *The View from Coyaba* seems to suggest that Pan-Africanism is a noble idea but difficult to put in practice. At Kwame Nkrumah’s graveside, David Brown thinks;

He had known this man alive and in power, a complicated man with a confusion of motives and impulses but totally committed to African freedom. Not in the clear and starkly simple way of Ben Bella, or the visionary and almost religious way of Nasser, but totally committed. Of the four who shaped the Third World Vision and the non-aligned dream, Nehru had been the only one he had not known personally. There were of course two others among the dream-makers: the venerable DR. DuBois who had nurtured the

dream longest of all, and George Padmore, the steady methodical organiser and over the years ... Kwame dead in exile at sixty-three and his dream in ashes all about us. DuBois gone too, at the ripe age of ninety-five, and Padmore too. Nehru a year after DuBois, and Nasser two years ago, in his prime. Only Ben Bella left and he and his dream under house arrest by men of a more practical turn of mind. DuBois must have died happiest of all. African freedom and unity still seemed to be spreading then, though there was, even then, a perceptible withdrawal from Nkrumah's strong vision. The hard and bitter problem to be moving to successful conclusion. And he was home in Africa, a venerated leader among the leaders of the continent. Yes, perhaps he was the greatest of the dream-keepers because he was not directly involved in the day-to-day politics of power ... (*The View from Coyaba*, 1985:322-333)

In the above quotation the leaders who believed in Pan-Africanism are called “dream-keepers” thus emphasizing its utopian quality. DuBois and George Padmore, presented as Lanwood in *A Wreath for Udomo*, are both intellectual theorists and their ideas have proved futile in practice, Lanwood ends up going back to England because it is home, he can no longer fit in Africa. The younger leaders are faced with coups implying that their reign does not represent the will of the people as shown in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, *Fragments* and

This Island Now. The Pan-African ideal is not fulfilled as it ruled out the differences among the people and tried to define them in a strait-jacket manner.

The Pan-African ideology also represents the betrayal of the people by the elite. The idea is a reaction to the racism they experienced and is therefore still attached to the west. It is not an ideology organic to Africa or one that is in touch with the basic needs of the people. Instead it is a search for a cure of the diseased mind of the elite.

END NOTES

1. "Letter from Josie Wallen to Kwame Nkrumah" in June Milne, *Kwame Nkrumah: The Conakry Years*, Panaf Books, London, 1990, p259.
2. Kwame Nkrumah, *Dark Days in Ghana*, Panaf Books, London, 1968, p37.
3. Quoted in James Africanus Horton, *West African Countries and Peoples 1868*, Edinburg University Press, London, 1969, pxiv.
4. J.E. Casely Hayford, *Ethiopia Unbound: Studies in Race Emancipation* (2nd edition), Frank Cass & Co. Ltd, London, 1969, pxxii-iv.
5. James Africanus Horton, *Opcit*, pxvii.

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6. Edward W. Blyden, *Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race*, C1887, Edinburg University Press, London, 1967, pxii.
 7. W.E.F. Ward, *A History of Ghana* (4th edition), George Allen & Unwin Ltd, London, 1967, p429.
 8. Frantz Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution* (translated by Haakan Chevalier), Writers and Readers Publishing Co-operation, 1967, p192.
 9. “Letter from Kwame Nkrumah to James and Grace Boggs” 6 December 1968 in June Milne, *Opcit*, p270.
 10. “Letter from Kwame Nkrumah to Idris Cox” in June Milne, *ibid*, p326.
 11. Kwame Nkrumah, *opcit*, p154
 12. W.E.F. Ward, *Opcit*, p432.
 13. Frantz Fanon, *Opcit*, 196.
 14. “Letter from Kwame Nkrumah to June Milne” in June Milne, *Opcit*, p315.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Frantz Fanon predicted the present problems of Africa in *The Wretched of the Earth* and put the blame solely on leaders as outlined in the chapter “the Pitfalls of National Consciousness”. He insists that the ideological bankruptcy of the new elite leaders leads to failure to uphold national unity and consequently African unity which is essential to free Africa from neo-colonialism. The divisions on tribal and religious lines by the masses are simply a way of following the leader’s example. The Algerian situation convinced Fanon that the only way to achieve unity is through armed struggle when the masses and the elite unite against colonialism. However, such a theory has been proven wrong by the various African states that achieved independence through armed struggle but still exhibit divisions.

Critics of Ayi Kwei Armah’s works have argued that to understand them one has to look at Fanon’s theories. Armah agrees with Fanon on the point of the leaders having betrayed Africa. Armah’s vision is social as opposed to the individualistic stance adopted by most of the African leaders. The artists and positive elite in Armah’s novels suffer because of their social vision in a world that repudiates it. However, he also shows that the sickness of Africa is centuries old, permeating the whole society. This means that the leaders are not to blame per se.

Peter Abrahams' main concern is that of individual freedom within the context of politics. He however realises that the individual still has to make decisions within the social context and at times they require him or her to sacrifice individual interests for the sake of a larger vision. In Michael Wade's words,

Peter Abraham sees the crises of individual freedom as the most urgent issue facing mankind, and he explores it through a variety of its aspects: but essentially his two most recent novels constitute a process of self-examination, an inspection of ideological and moral choices he has made and the position he has adopted, in relation to the contemporary reality. ... It is a paradox characteristic of our times that Abrahams, hailed as an Anglophone apostle of Negritude, the propagandist of Pan-Africans, and most widely known as an "African novelist" or a 'Negro under' (which last he most emphatically is not) should possess so universal a commitment to the cause of mankind.¹

On moral choices, Peter Abrahams insists that the end does not justify the means. Leaders must be wary of use of violence and depriving people of their rights because it is difficult to soften a hardened heart. Like Armah, he realises that Africa has failed due to many reasons, but mainly because the leaders are not free from mental colonisation. In Peter Abrahams' latest book, as in Armah's *The Healers*, he advocates a withdrawal from society by those with the

moral vision of rebuilding Africa. The history of Africa has been that of withdrawal from moral systems and rebuilding from time to time. For example, the Mfecane and Boer war forced the Matabele into wild conquest. Damfo and Densu are compelled to withdraw in order to escape manipulation. The trick is to leave behind the bitter historical scars of the immoral system one withdraws from. African leaders have failed to see themselves simply as a people developing their countries without having to answer to their former colonisers. Instead their very action has been aimed at showing Europe that they are human, capable of development. In other words, they have not been freed from the historical scars.

Consequently two types of leaders are born; weak leaders that believe Europe is master forever and must be obeyed on one hand and the strong, militant leaders that believe Europe can be conquered and enslaved by their own history on the other hand. The latter group feels it is ready to tackle problems of modernity as well as Europeans because of the Western type of education it has received. Ideas centred on African identity are important to the militant group because they boost their confidence in themselves as people. As noted in the earlier chapters, the tendency has been to pursue the ideal and ignore the basic needs of the masses. Instead of developing stage by stage, the leaders have opted for large leaps they have called the revolution which has left a lot of loop-holes that the Western community has used to maintain its control within the seemingly

progressive states such as Kwame Nkrumah's Ghana. The nation- state was adopted hastily before the people were ready for it.

Thus for many states professed statehood does not derive from any ability to do things that are expected of a state- to impose taxation, build roads, provide education and health services, enforce the law and protect citizens; many of them have no capacity to accomplish such duties. They are states because the international community chooses to regard them as such and the rules of the international game prevents fragmentation.²

To provide the services a state has to provide, African leaders have had to borrow from Europe and hence have ensured the economic hegemony of Europe. The need to prove that they are able to perform the duties of a state is triggered by racial pride embodied in the Pan-African ideology, which itself is a reaction to the history of oppression by Europe through slavery and colonialism. Instead they ought to have tried to remodel their states taking into consideration the pre-colonial states. This would have helped in regaining dignity as the people would have seen something of their own history functioning within a modern state. Mamadou Dia argues that

 Their mistake- our mistake- has been under the pretext of fighting
 "Balkanization", not to have taken into consideration the pre-colonial fact
 of territorialism. Our mistake has been not to have paid enough attention

in our analysis to this phenomenon, which is the fruit of colonisation if you like, but also a sociological fact which no theory of unity, be it ever so laudable or attractive, can abolish. We have allowed ourselves to be seduced by a mirage; that the structure which is the most pleasing to our minds, and mistaking our ideal for reality we have believed it enough to condemn territorialism and its natural sequel, micro-nationalism, for us to get the better of them, and to ensure the success of our ecumenical undertaking.³

The leaders then have gone wrong in so far as they have betrayed the uniqueness of Africa by believing in the linear progression of civilisation and thereby following in the footsteps of Europe.

On the other hand, the leaders are not totally to blame as the seeming betrayal is due to the wrong notions of independence and what it entailed on the part of the led. Most of them believed that once independence was achieved all their cares and burdens would be lifted; they would live happily ever after. They did not realise that there was still a lot of work that needed to be done to develop the economy of their countries and enable them to live “like the white men” as most aspired to do. The leader was therefore supposed to be a Messiah, or a wand-waving magician to bring all their aspirations to pass. What the leader said or did was infallible and therefore not open to criticism amidst the euphoria of

independence. By the time the people realised the truth and decided to protest, they had given total power to the leader such as conferring on him Life – presidency. He in turn had closed all channels of communication believing in his infallibility as the praise songs by the people had depicted him. The people, disillusioned, begin to look for individual or family messiahs to bring the national cake home to the detriment of the nation's progress.

Another factor to consider is that the International forces do not leave the newly found states to make their own progress. They continue to manipulate them so as to ensure that their gains, initiated by colonialism, are not lost. This is done through the International Organisations. At times by secretly supplying weapons to ensure that all disputes result in armed warfare and the dream of national unity and African unity is lost forever.

The prophecies of Frantz Fanon and Peter Abrahams have therefore been fulfilled. African leaders now need to be sober, redirect Africa on the moral path suggested by Abrahams and Armah in their works (i.e. respect people's rights and not just pay lip-service to them). Africa has aspired to defeat the western world at its own game of cunning and lost. The moral honest way takes longer to achieve its goal but whatever achievements are made are on a firm foundation and guaranteed to last unlike that which is achieved hastily. In the latter many are simply swept by the storm without knowing what is happening.

They are therefore liable to be selfish so as to give purpose and meaning to their lives. If the leader works with his people, fully explaining his ideas and getting feedback from them, no one can complain of betrayal.

END NOTES

1. Michael Wade, *Peter Abrahams*, Evans Brothers Ltd, London, 1972, p6-7.
2. Paul Gifford, *African Christianity: Its Public Role*, Hurst &Co. Ltd, London, 1998, p8-9.
3. Quoted in Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (translated by Constance Farrington), Penguin Books, London, 1967, p126-7).

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