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COLONIALISM AND MIMICRY:
A Literary Lens into Governance in Africa

Andrew Nyongesa

ABSTRACT: *In the recent past, scholars have delved into the challenges African countries face in establishing Western-style democracy, often overlooking the insights provided by literary works. Most political and social science writers attribute these challenges to corruption, ethnic mobilization, and illiteracy (Forson et al. 2016). However, little attention has been given to the similarities between colonial structures and post-independent African autocracies as delineated in literary works. The pioneer modern states in Africa emerged during colonialism and were inherently authoritarian, with aims inconsistent with democratic principles. While early Black thinkers highlight colonial violence as a key aspect to mimic for Africa's liberation, contemporary scholarship has paid little attention to imitation of other colonial elements such as negative ethnicity, autocracy, corruption, political assassinations, and murders in literary works. This study examines the nexus between poor governance and colonial heritage as represented in Ayi Kwei Armah's* The Beautiful One Are Not Yet Born *(1968), Brian Chikwava's* Harare North *(2009), and David Mulwa's* Inheritance *(2005). This analytical study was carried out on the three African works of fiction and drama to interrogate the impact of colonial heritage on the sparse democratic gains and poor governance in sub-Saharan Africa today. The primary texts were purposively sampled because of the prevalence of the subject. Using qualitative inquiry, I deploy narrative research to*

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analyze data from primary and secondary texts. The study was anchored in Homi Bhabha's postcolonial concept of mimicry as a theoretical base for interpretation.

KEYWORDS: *Ayi Kwei Armah, Homi Bhabha, mimicry, postcolonial literature, poor governance*

INTRODUCTION

Writers have delved into poor governance in Africa because of neocolonialism, defined by "radical Marxist" intellectuals as continued political and economic dominance by colonial masters in independent African nations (Uzoigwe 2019, 70). Pioneer African literary writers such as Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, Nuruddin Farah, and Francis Imbuga perpetually condemn the extension of colonialism in post-independent Africa. Despite this criticism, most African nations experienced one-party dictatorships that accentuated sycophancy, cronyism, and myriad forms of corruption.

The advent of Western democracy in the 90s has largely not changed governance in Africa. The incumbent leaders often rig elections and manipulate instruments of power to oppress the opposition. Abu Bakarr Bah (2004) describes these new African governments as "quasi democracies" that exhibit want of ideology, accentuate corruption, and intimidate the opposition to rig elections (7). In Kenya, for instance, literary writers such as Ngũgĩ (1980) have argued that independence merely replaced white imperialists with Black ones who perpetuate corruption and avaricious acts typical of colonialism. Ngũgĩ's perspectives resonate with Walter Rodney's (2018) conceptualization of the West as a cause of the disruption of African civilization, introducing values that changed and disrupted its evolution (37). Frantz Fanon (1963) also demonstrates how colonialism disrupted the way of life of African people through deliberate cultural uprooting and displacement from ancestral land (69). Rodney contends that the disruption diverted Africa from her progress, leading to the adoption of Western values such as rationalization, securalization, and imperialism, which to some extent remain the cause of underdevelopment.

Rodney's (2018) perspective on development includes immaterial elements such as moral values (honesty, contentment, generosity), the arts, religious beliefs, and political structures in which African people excelled. John Mbiti (1970) highlights the interdependence between the individual, society, and the ancestors in African families (141). The individual had to show concern for others and ancestors to build a strong family to aide in perpetuation of the community rather than

facilitate material benefit (140). Edward Blyden (1887/1957) associates African culture with spirituality (136), sympathy, and concern for others (Mgwebi 2008, 56). Commenting on spirituality, Mbiti observes that "to be" in the African context is to be "religious in a religious universe" (343). These religious ideals uphold values such as humility, contentment, honesty, love, care, kindness, and cooperation above material endowments. The sudden change to Western material values (rationality, the state, and imperialism) marked a regression, forcing Africans to start from the basics of the new culture. This is possibly why Rodney titles his book *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* to suggest that African people were compelled to abandon advanced stages of their civilization and begin to learn the basics of a new culture. According to Sarah Matti (2017), imitation is a learning strategy among young siblings (2); it is not prevalent among experienced learners. This study contends that Western interference during colonialism bolstered imitation (i.e., mimicry), which turned out to be the prime cause of poor governance in Africa today.

As a mirror of society, literature offers an impassioned perspective to political issues that communities experience. Rather than merely mirroring reality, artists act on reality and present it in the most natural manner (Jackson 2013, 241). Jackson expounds, "[t]he artist is the one who sees into life, perceives all its richness and complexity in depth" (242). African literature depicts mimicry and poor governance in Africa with more finesse than sociology, political science, and history. The selected literary works in this study are justified because the authors relate their subjects to actual historical and political accounts in African countries. The authors are also drawn from different regions of sub-Saharan Africa for objectivity: West Africa (Ayi Kwei Armah), East Africa (David Mulwa), and southern Africa (Brian Chikwava).

Armah's *The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born* tells the story of a nameless protagonist whose profound disillusionment is evident throughout his observation of unfolding political happenings in post-independent Ghana. Surrounded by corrupt characters who revere Western values, the protagonist tolerates alien values in the new independent Ghana. His wife, Oyo; Koomson, the minister; former classmate, the bus driver; and the president exhibit foreign values to the extent that the protagonist's idealism alienates him. Oyo and the protagonist's mother-in-law deliberately transgress his philosophy, leading him to seek companionship with Teacher—a recluse deserted by family for his distaste for Western materialistic values. The protagonist and Teacher mourn the advent of strange values that Black leaders uphold to replace African values—greed, individualism, indifference, and corruption. Nkrumah's pre-independence promise of Black people's participation in Ghana's economic life is unfulfilled. Consequently, most characters live in

isolation, as they cannot adjust to the imperialistic ideas that replace the cultural values of Ghanaians.

Mulwa's *Inheritance* spans three regimes and their impact on Kutula's citizens, a fictional African state. The play begins with the colonial regime embodied in Governor Thorn Mackay who paves way for King Kutula XV. Lacuna Kasoo, his son, betrays him; he is assassinated and the son assumes the reins to establish a regime that executes the colonial script with meticulous dexterity. Whereas King Kutula tries to implement aspects of African tradition and limit Western influence, his son Lacuna takes advice from Goldenstein and Menninger to bolster Western imperialism with its attendant demerits. The play compares colonial and postcolonial political structures and points out profound similarities. The first three regimes are autocracies, but as the play ends, Lacuna's adopted sister, Sangoi, promises a democratic government after she overthrows him in a peaceful demonstration.

Chikwava's *Harare North* narrates the story of a nameless immigrant who flees Zimbabwe for England because of the political crisis. As a member of the Green Bombers, a military wing of the ruling party, ZANU PF, he kills an opposition supporter. The ruling party (ZANU-PF) officials demand that he pay a bribe in a foreign currency; he resolves to flee to England to join other Zimbabwean undocumented immigrants such as Aleck, Farayi, Tsitsi, Sekai, and Shingi. In the host nation, ideological differences play out as his fellow immigrants such as Sekai and Aleck question the narrator's fanatic support for Robert Mugabe. The president's abuse of power and divisive politics are brought to the fore to suggest his inclination toward the colonial tactics of which he was the victim. Aleck demonstrates how African leaders practice garbled versions of modern political systems, in general, and Western democracy, in particular. Haunted by dependency and Ngozi spirits from his motherland, the narrator's friend, Shingi, loses his job and is murdered by a drug addict while soliciting food in the bins. Shingi's death adversely affects the narrator, and he loses his sanity in England.

Collectively, these works suggest that there is a nexus between poor governance in Africa and imitation of Western cultural, political, and economic systems. Had colonists left Africans to advance their political thought and values, as Rodney submits, they would possibly have a political system that works for them. The three texts espouse honest living, concern for others, and contentment as African values—Armah's *The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, unity in diversity; sanctity for ancestral homelands in Chikwava's *Harare North*; humility, contentment, spirituality, and respect of cultural heritage in Mulwa's *Inheritance*. The latter, in particular, underlines the need for an Africanized political system of government.

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REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURES

This section includes a review of related literatures to establish gaps in the research and specify the major canon of analysis in the study. I begin with a theoretical review and end the section by examining the empirical review of the study. Literary scholars define postcolonialism as the conflict between marginal and dominant groups; they expound that postcolonial studies turn the world upside down such that any study that looks at issues from the view of the despised immigrant would be considered postcolonial criticism (Young 2003, 2). Robert Young's ideas are invaluable to this study, as he examines African governance from the perspective of the contest between dominant Western systems of government and African culture. Unlike Young, this study singles out mimicry as a product of colonial influence that potentially degrades African governance, as represented in three contemporary works of African fiction.

Literary scholars attest to the downsides of mimicry to the colonized and its potential to diminish their abilities. Homi Bhabha (1984) defines mimicry as a "partial and incomplete practice of imprecise identity" that fails to reflect the original culture and the colonizers (126). In other words, Bhabha suggests that Africa's diversion from its evolutionary path to the imitation of the West in social and political aspects constitutes an abandonment of the original in favor of the partial. Mimicry in this context bears aspects of incompleteness to leave room for confusion and ambivalence in the victim. In other words, Africa's attempts to imitate Western mannerisms, including systems of governance, are the colonizer's ploy to establish control through the aforementioned contradictions (ambivalence) and muddling (confusion). While Africans boast of the attainment of Western democratic values, the colonizers perceive them as mimics with a desire to present themselves as "reformed, recognizable others" (Bhabha 1984, 126). They are "reformed" from the original cultural identity that would have bolstered their evolution to a developed global citizen rather than a copycat whose present strange new trajectory lacks clarity and vision. Bhabha's concept of mimicry is invaluable to this study as it interrogates the confusion behind the failure of Western political systems in Africa as represented in Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, Chikwava's *Harare North*, and Mulwa's *Inheritance*.

There are several studies on the causes of poor governance and corruption in sub-Saharan Africa. Joseph Ato Forson et al. (2016) point out the historical roots and contemporary issues that are major causes of corruption (564). They expound that British colonizers established a more efficient civil service than French, Italians, Belgians, and other European colonizers. In their perspective, former British colonies experience fewer

instances of graft; however, they contend that the odd tactics by which colonialism was established (such as ethnic sectarianism) accentuate corruption. Forson et al. argue that corruption prevalence rates are directly proportional to levels of ethnocentrism. On contemporary issues, the scholars single out income levels as having great impact on corruption, in the sense that poor countries cannot fund strong institutions to combat the vice.

Forson et al. (2016) raise pertinent ideas that enrich the present study, for instance, their inference on historical roots suggests that mimicry of colonial practices plays a role in poor governance and corruption. The scholars' reference to negative ethnicity as an element of colonial heritage expounds aspects of mimicry that the present study investigates further. Whereas Forson et al. delimit their study of poor governance in the field of public administration with relevant theories, the present study adopts Bhabha's concept of mimicry to extend the subject to literary studies. Further, the present study evades contemporary issues such as the nexus between income levels and poor governance and narrows itself to the link between colonial legacy and poor governance in sub-Saharan Africa as represented in the three literary texts.

Some studies associate poor governance and endemic corruption with the absence of the rule of law. Yury Fedotov (2012) avers that corruption and the rule of law are inversely proportional (1). Citing the Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Fedotov writes, "[w]here corruption exists, the rule of law cannot flourish." Fedotov's observations are invaluable to the present study as they help in examining whether the impunity in some African nations as represented in three primary texts stems from colonial legacy.

Literary critics explore a new form of colonialism in postcolonial literature because Black leaders perpetuated aspects of colonialism after independence. Bongane Mohale, M. J. Mogoboya, and M. E. Montle (2020), in their analysis of *The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, contend that post-independence leaders established a new form of colonialism in which the oppressed became the oppressors (310). As a result, disillusionment pervaded the newly independent nations as the new form of Black colonialism that replaced the old White form. Mohale, Mogoboya, and Montle's study enriches the present research as it refers to political malpractices in Armah's novel as neocolonialism. The present study expounds on Mohale, Mogoboya, and Montle's study by singling out mimicry as the root cause of neocolonialism in two other works of African fiction: Mulwa's *Inheritance* and Chikwava's *Harare North.*

Literary critics have examined the misuse of power and neocolonial propensities in Mulwa's *Inheritance*. Namayi and Mugubi (2018)

interrogate the exploitative relationship between the British and citizens of King Kutula in the text and observe that it stems from the manipulation of power as postulated by Foucault's conception of power (25). Namayi and Mugubi's study is vital to the present study as they both establish a link between the exploitation of African citizens in Mulwa's *Inheritance* to the colonial heritage. Whereas Namayi and Mugubi anchor their study in Foucault's multifaceted conception of power in which a leader manipulates the citizens, the present study adopts Bhabha's concept of mimicry to examine poor governance as a counterfeit parody of the West.

Literary critics have delved into the political crisis of Zimbabwe as represented in Chikwava's *Harare North*. Oliver Nyambi and Tendai Mangena (2023) read the narrator of *Harare North* as representative of African immigrants dominated by the fear of the return to the ancestral home and continued sorjourn in the host nation (13). According to Nyambi and Mangena, the narrator of *Harare North* is scared to return to Zimbabwe where he is supposed to bribe the regime to pardon his murder of an opposition supporter. Similarly, he dreads living in England because of the cultural transformations expected of him. Nyambi and Mangena argue that the host nation is characterized by "cultures acquired, rejected, and transferred, languages adopted and adapted to, foods eaten, contacts (un)made, and pasts forgotten, remembered, and re-membered"; hence the narrator's fear.

Nyambi and Mangena's (2023) study enriches this article, as they both point out the political crisis of Zimbabwe that remains the major cause of postcolonial migration to the West. However, the present study squarely blames Robert Mugabe's leadership style, which is based on British high-handed colonial dominance, unlike Nyambi and Mangena who focus on his traits. Further, the scholars focus on fear in the context of the migrant experience while the present study interrogates how mimicry of the colonizer results in the pathetic governance in Zimbabwe as represented in Chikwava's *Harare.*

This study examines the nexus between poor governance and colonial heritage as represented in the three primary texts. The study compares the colonial administration in Africa with present government structures, analyzes the cause, and interrogates the influence of colonial heritage on poor governance in African nations in the three texts. The study employs purposive sampling—I read and sampled three works of fiction based on setting, presence of subjects relevant to colonialism, poor governance, and neocolonialism. These considerations were aimed at enabling interrogation of the semblance between present political structures and colonialism to explore the impact of mimicry

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as represented in selected texts. Three texts were chosen, the first from West Africa, the second from southern Africa, and the third from East Africa, to ensure ample sample size for interrogation of the thesis.

Close textual reading of Armah's *The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, Chikwava's *Harare North*, and Mulwa's *Inheritance* enabled the collection of the primary data for the study and secondary data through articles and books. Primary data was enriched by secondary data from studying, reviewing, and selecting scholarly and literary articles from refereed journals and books from online sources. Secondary data propped the study to interrogate the merits of Western democracy and explore traditional systems of government as potent neglected spaces poised to offer lasting solutions to state fragmentation in Africa. In other words, secondary data from books bolstered knowledge of major theories such as postcolonialism to examine the impact of mimicry on present political structures in Africa as represented in the three primary texts.

Bhabha's (1984) concept of mimicry (from postcolonial criticism) guided the comparison of colonialism and present political systems as represented in the three primary works of fiction. According to Bhabha, mimicry constitutes the colonized's adoption of the colonizer's culture with a view to establishing a "reformed and recognizable other" (127). The colonized strives to please the colonizer in an ambivalent fashion that leads to confusion. Bhabha observes that the victim is "reformed" because they abandon their philosophy and is controlled or "regulated, and disciplined" in such a way that they lack a clear identity exhibiting a contradiction in which they adopt just enough of the new form to be recognized by the colonizer while representing that form in excess. The tenets of this theory were essential in interrogating the possibility of African leaders practicing severe forms of colonial rule after independence. Since postcolonialism arose after the clash of cultures that followed the advent of colonialism (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 1995), historical sources were consulted to enable a comparison between colonial and present structures as represented in primary texts.

COLONIAL AND POSTCOLONIAL POLITICAL REGIMES: EFFECTS OF IMITATIONS IN SELECTED WORKS OF FICTION

This section interrogates the aspects of mimicry that post-independent African leaders exhibited to limit originality about the choice of political systems in light of Bhabha's concept of mimicry. Pertinent features of colonial structures are analyzed side-by-side with present structures

as represented in the three selected works of fiction. This section begins with Armah's *The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, proceeds to Chikwava's *Harare North*, and ends with Mulwa's *Inheritance.*

Mimicry and Disillusionment in Ghana: Armah's The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born

The post-independent politics in *The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born* demonstrates attributes of mimicry through propensities to execute aspects of the colonial script to extremes. As a British colony between 1891 and 1957, scholars observe that colonial Ghana exhibited social stratification, particularly between regions with large-scale cocoa plantations and those that only supplied labor (Young and Bolt 2018). The colonial social structure constituted European government officials, large-scale cocoa farmers, cattle holders, African government administrators, government employees, skilled workers, miners, unskilled laborers, petty traders, and domestic servants, respectively (Young and Bolt 2018, 11–13). Young and Bolt (2018) contend that these inequalities became glaring in the 1930s after the expansion of cocoa farming. This may have informed Nkrumah's hastiness to pledge an economic system in Ghana that would ensure social equality at independence. Adom Getachew (2019) writes, "[c]entral to the nationalist project of postcolonial citizenship was a developmental and welfarist state that would restructure the national economy to ensure equality" (35); by this, Nkrumah sought to introduce policies that would reduce the gap between the rich and the poor.

A few years of Nkrumah's administration exacerbated the social stratification in Armah's *The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born* because materialism substituted living values that constitute African civilization. In the novel, Rodney's contention concerning the disruption of African civilization is brought to the fore. For Bhabha, this is an imitation of colonial structure executed to the extremes. In Armah's post-independent Ghana, as represented in *The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, class and materialism run through society from the leadership to the lowest of the low. Class becomes a virtue, the ethical compass, and the moral that every Ghanaian has to pursue. The desire for honest living that pervaded traditional African communities (Mbiti 1970) is severely eroded, alienating the pursuers of such ideals. Sarah Jilani (2019) observes that materialism is deeply entrenched in Armah's *The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, such that the acquisition of wealth becomes the fulcrum around which "care and love are expressed, identity and recognition reinforced" (84). Given their poverty, the man and Teacher confront

challenges in their interaction with family and friends. Koomson, the protagonist's former classmate, leads by example to inculcate the materialistic philosophy that alienates the poor in a way that is inconsistent with Nkrumah's promise.

Oyo, the man's wife, believes in no other aspect of success apart from the acquisition of material things. For example, she derides her husband's refusal to take a bribe and labels him *chichidodo*—the bird that eats shit but refuses the worms in it (Armah 1968, 50). Armah describes her as having flat eyes, "totally accepting and unquestioning," to symbolize the passivity of Ghanaian society to values espoused by the dictatorship. Oyo's materialistic attribute is evident when she mocks her husband for questioning Koomson's source of wealth. While he roams around giving handouts to the citizenry, there is no correlation between his legitimate income and his acts of charity to the electorate. Oyo casts a sarcastic utterance, describing the man as an "onward Christian soldier" (51), and proceeds to join hands with her mother to accept Koomson's offer of fishing boats. Although it appears as a great act of community service, Koomson gives help selectively—to relatives, friends, or cronies. It is apparent that he has not assisted the woman who comes to borrow sugar in the man's home (50). Subsequently, the man finds himself isolated from his family and seeks company in his naked friend, Teacher.

The narrator summarizes Oyo's philosophy as "the blinding gleam of beautiful new houses and shine of new Mercedes cars; it is also the scent of expensive perfumes and a mass of new wig" (Armah 1968, 65). The gleam in the quote represents materialism and craving for class and Oyo's admiration signifies the influence of the political leader as to what success constitutes. As much as the colonialists exacerbated class, the post-independent government is obsessed with it, which leads to poor governance. This reiterates Bhabha's observation that mimicry bears aspects of incompleteness that pave the way for confusion.

In the novel, Ghana is represented as "incomplete" because the government is devoid of values on which the rule of law stands to eradicate corruption and establish a developed society. As Rodney contends, development is multifaceted, and the precolonial African societies had great attainments in values that would have enabled them to establish better political systems. Colonial disruption could only lead to imitation that introduces politics without ethical values, such as honesty and contentment. The "confusion" is palpable in the establishment of "development" devoid of a sense of purpose as they just acquire material things but confront the guilt of moral transgressions against fellow citizens. The driver, for instance, feels guilty when the man sees him smelling the cedi and not returning change to some passengers (Armah 1968, 8).

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Similarly, the taxi driver has lost every sense of humanity because of his pursuit of material gains. He pulls phlegm, spits at the protagonist, and uses expletives to address him, "[m]oron of a frog, if your time has come, search for someone else to take your miserable life—your mother's rotten cunt," (11). According to John Mugubi (2017), literary writers have a poetic license to use taboo words to express moral decadence in society (67). Armah in this episode further demonstrates the "incompleteness," typical of mimicry as Bhabha postulates. For Rodney, Africa is concerned with "development" without the immaterial values, such as honesty, love, and care, that form the cornerstone of authentic development.

For example, while the man's neighbor cannot afford to buy sugar, the leader appears in the town in a limousine and black suit. The limousine reinforces Bhabha's assertion on the "excesses" typical of the colonized who imitate. African leaders seem to have a liking for luxury that drives their countries into financial crises. Khalili Timamy (2011) points out Daniel Arap Moi (Kenya), Robert Mugabe (Zimbabwe), Fredrick Chiluba (Zambia), and Omar Bongo (Gabon) as examples of leaders who used corruption for personal benefit and the sustenance of their political regimes (383). In the novel, the citizens address the leader, "my lord," as he dishes out groceries to them without asking for change. He buys the wares from petty traders as the wife in the limousine complains that the fridge is too full to accommodate anything (Armah 1968, 43). The reader wonders why a state with such affluent leaders cannot enable the poor woman to afford sugar. Bhabha's mimicry gives an appropriate answer to the question—the incompleteness of the product of imitation. The colonial product or imitator is a "partial presence" itself (Bhabha 1984, 127), that is, by creating a new identity, a "partial Other," not fully coarse, not fully cultivated, through an unfinished "reformation of the colonial subject" the colonial power sets up a failure. This is why most African leaders with the uncritical inclination for Westernization hardly succeed—failure is an inherent ingredient of mimicry.

Koomson gloats around in ill-gained wealth from stolen taxes to dish handouts to the poor instead of making sound investments that would provide meaningful employment to the citizens, as most Western leaders do. Koomson and Nkrumah in *The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born* behave like buffoons in a parody, as Bhabha suggests possibly because, according to the tenets of the adopted form of government, they are tantamount to rehabilitated misfits who occupy the positions by unmerited favor. Instead of offering leadership, they solely play a role in a parody that pleases the masters—the former colonizers. In the

present episode, the masses refer to Koomson as "my White man" and "bread is all yours," as the singer urges him to buy groceries "for his girlfriends" (Armah 1968, 43) if his fridges are already full. At this point, Armah makes snide references to the sexual immorality that pervades the private lives of African dictators at independence and present. Idi Amin, for instance, was renowned for bragging about his potency and having many illicit sexual relationships; despite his five wives, he still had children outside wedlock (Leopold 2020, 258). In *The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, Armah brings out sexual immorality as an element of the colonized's attempt to execute the colonizer's script to extremes. Armah uses taboo to demonstrate how African leaders such as Koomson and fellow leaders visit nightclubs to have sex with girls despite having wives in their homes (105). Armah's reference is an indictment of Nkrumah's person as having many girlfriends during his reign; editorial cartoons after the coup in 1966 suggest that he had many girlfriends on whom he lavished expensive gifts (Jallow 2014, 89). Although colonialism disrupted the communal life of African peoples, colonial administrators were not as obsessed with sexual immorality as their Black counterparts.

The leadership's reverence for materialism permeates Ghanaian society such that the values of people are solely pegged on how much money and material property they are prepared to offer. According to S. Emmanuel Zumakpeh (1992), Armah shows that it is the bearing of the leadership in society that brings about materialism and alienation of the poor. He expounds that the Koomsons of Ghana and Africa, by their greed, engender all moral bewilderment (5). Teacher's mother's remarks reiterate Zumakpeh's observation, as she belongs to the older generation that ought to remind the Ghanaian leadership of the necessity of the values that foster good governance. On the contrary, she castigates Teacher for his inclination toward honesty. Her materialistic trait is evident in Teacher's dream when she says, "[h]ow much money have you given me in all your life, and how much help?" (Armah 1968, 70). In her new perspective, the child's value is determined by the material gifts they can offer regardless of their values. Children who cannot give material gifts to parents are detested and written off. In the novel, Teacher is naked to depict his loneliness or alienation from a society with whom he ought to maintain mutually beneficial relationships. This is why Omar Al-Assad (2011) contends that *The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born* laments about African suffering and centuries of cultural obliteration (13). In other words, mimicry contributes to the eradication of African values such as spiritual aspects of family (Mbiti 1970, 141) and religious ideals such as contentment, love, and kindness to institute a counterfeit materialistic philosophy that benefits the colonizers and puppet new leaders.

Teacher and the man complain about Nkrumah's sublime promises to attest to the fact that they went unfulfilled. Teacher says, "[t]he promise was so beautiful" (100) and in the next section describes Nkrumah's speech of the promise, "[w]e do not serve ourselves if we remain like insects, fascinated by the white people's power. . . . Today, when we say it, it is a promise, not yet a fact. . . . Freedom!" (101). Nkrumah exhibits all attributes of great oratory—but his promise of freedom from the White man, in Bhabha's theorization, is questionable. Like many other Ghanaian emigrants Teacher derides, Nkrumah had lived in the West possibly because of his fascination with "white people's power." The promise of freedom is vague because as an imitator, and emigrant, he is destitute of an African vision on which to establish an independent Ghana. Naivety is the prime cause of Teacher's belief in Nkrumah's speeches. How different is Nkrumah from other victims of mimicry Teacher describes earlier?

> They came late and spoke to their servants in the legal English they had spent 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 in them. How could they understand that even those who have not been anywhere know that the black man who has spent his life fleeing from himself into whiteness has no power if the white master gives him none? (Armah 1968, 95)

On this page, Teacher's assertions resonate with Bhabha's argument that mimicry is a site for the colonizer's control over the colonized. First, the new African leaders imitate the colonizer's language to speak it to African people possibly because they do not value the people's language. Second, the constitutions they apply are borrowed from the West such that they have scanty knowledge of their contents. The so-called "democracy" that Nkrumah, Daniel Moi, and Frederick Chiluba practiced was contrary to that in Western countries. For instance, Nkrumah's decision to replace the national flag with that of the CPP and the claim that multiparty democracy elevates ethnicity and political competition in Africa (Asamoah 2005, 103) was inconsistent to Western democracy. Worse still was the propensity of a pan-Africanist to stick to Western political practices without any thought of traditional African democracy where decisions were reached by consensus (Asamoah 2005, 102). How democratic or pan-African was Nkrumah? His political career exhibits Bhabha's notion of confusion and failure arising from mimicry. In the last sentence, Teacher demonstrates the ineptitude of the mimic to execute substantial change, to reiterate Bhabha's postulation. Similar to

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the image of disappointment in Armah's *The Beautyful One Are Not Yet Born*, Nkrumah is overthrown in 1966 with disillusioned citizenry in Ghana.

Negative Ethnicity and Poor Governance in Zimbabwe: Chikwava's Harare North

Mimicry in Chikwava's *Harare North* is evident in the semblance between divisive tactics employed by colonial administrators and Robert Mugabe. At the advent of colonialism, the British executed the divide-and-rule maxim to set tensions in Shona-Ndebele relations. At the signing of the Rudds's concession in 1888, the Ndebele had an influential political entity under Lobengula, while the Shona were decentralized and managed their affairs under councils of elders. The British South African Company signed the concession with Lobengula, whom they considered a threat to create time for conquest. In the meantime, the invaders annexed Mashona land, and as the Shona got edgy at Lobengula's betrayal, their tribesmen stole cattle from the Ndebele, whose military response came face to face with British soldiers. In July 1893, the British defeated Ndebele warriors (with the Shona on their side)—and Lobengula fled to the north. Three years later, the Shona and Ndebele united during Chimurenga, but after their defeat, the Ndebele took advantage of their central government to negotiate and get positions as chiefs in the colonial government (Zembe 2015, 76). Cecil Rhodes established colonial rule in South Rhodesia along ethnic division between the major African communities in Zimbabwe. After independence, Mugabe gave a speech:

> I urge you whether black or white, to join me in a new pledge, to forget our grim past, forgive others and forget, join hands in a new amity, and together as Zimbabweans, trample upon racism, tribalism, and regionalism. (Fisher 2010, 28)

In the speech, he promises inclusion and better governance, which Bhabha is skeptical of among elites who are pervaded by Western ideas such as Robert Mugabe and Kwame Nkrumah. The democratic process that led to Mugabe's government is borrowed from the West; therefore, the new leaders are "reformed and recognizable others" (Chikwava 2009, 127) who strive to please the colonizer in an ambivalent fashion that leads to confusion. The ambivalence is evident when Mugabe oscillates between love for white and Black, resulting in grievous political mistakes. In the first eighteen years, he resorted to colonial tactics that

tolerated white settlers and increased tensions between the Shona and the Ndebele. For instance, he marginalized the Ndebele from government and detained their leaders. In a punitive expedition (Gukurahundi) in 1982, Mugabe murdered more than twenty thousand members of the Ndebele community (Phmister 2008, 197). Mugabe's acts of violence resonate with Bhabha's postulation that in mimicry, the colonized executes the colonizer's behavior in excess as he uses colonial tactics to heighten Shona-Ndebele tensions.

Mugabe's heinous acts in post-independent Zimbabwe are represented in Chikwava's *Harare North* as he consistently persecutes opposition supporters, mostly because they are of the Ndebele ethnicity. By 2006, ZANU PF had more than 85 percent support from Mugabe's Shona ethnic community (Cheeseman and Ford 2007, 14) leaving the Ndebele with no other option except for the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). Bhabha's ambivalence and confusion are evident when in the year 2000, Mugabe vacillates from his support for white settlers and orders them to leave Zimbabwe. As Bhabha suggests, the mimic is devoid of a reliable ideological stance, which sets them up for failure. The West demonstrates her control over Zimbabwe by declaring the country a pariah state—the economy collapsed as MDC stood up to Mugabe's policies.

MDC's opposition against Mugabe's land policies provokes him to abuse state powers by sending ragtag militias from his Shona backyard to mete out violence on Ndebele opposition zones. Comrade Mhiripiri in *Harare North* trains the Green Bombers (the armed wing of Mugabe's ZANU-PF) to equip them with military skills and inculcate a philosophy that perpetuates violence against the opposition (mostly Ndebele). The choice of militia is meant to circumvent the use of police who are significantly comprised of the Ndebele and would not adhere to the state's directives to persecute fellow Ndebeles. The militia's mantra is, "[f]or traitors, punishment is the best forgiveness" (Chikwava 2009, 19). The paradox of punishment being forgiveness depicts Mugabe's obsession with instruments of violence to marginalize and persecute those who question his authority. With more intervention from the international community, the ruling party lets up and members of the Green Bombers (mostly Shona) start to confront their criminal past. The narrator is arrested after killing an opposition supporter, possibly from the Ndebele community, and is compelled to flee to England, which is figuratively referred to as Harare North. Comrade Mhiripri, a fellow Shona, flees to England and takes the code name Master Fox Hound. In reminiscence, he tells the narrator how they meted out violence on opposition supporters in the pretext of "forgiveness."

They chime the term "forgiveness," and the idlers under the chestnut tree take the cue. As they chant, "Forgives! Forgiveness! Forgiveness!" Mhiripiri gets so scared that he becomes hysterical, "[t]hrusting of arms and elbows as Peter and the guys is all over me trying to restrain me" (183). Mhiripiri is possibly scared because he committed so many crimes against the opposition in Zimbabwe, but now he is in hiding in a country that supports the opposition party. If apprehended in Britain, he fears he may probably end up at the International Criminal Court in The Hague.

Mugabe's authoritarian regime encourages fanatic following among members of the Shona ethnicity regardless of its violations of human rights. As Friedrich Nietzsche (2013) observes, the fanatic attachments that are exhibited through "devotion, and idealization of the commander" (721) demonstrate the victims' inability to acquire power. The narrator personifies this fanaticism in England in his arguments and distaste for Aleck, who is possibly Ndebele. Further, Zembe observes that the construction of relationships among Black Zimbabweans in Britain cannot be well understood in isolation from ethnic conflicts of the colonial and postcolonial experiences of Zimbabwe's history. He points out the Gukurahundi of 1982, which was the most potent factor that affected diaspora relations between the Shona and the Ndebele (Chikwava 2009, 183). Going by Zembe's observation, Aleck's political stance with regard to the ruling ZANU PF and Mugabe automatically disqualifies his membership in the Shona ethnicity. Aleck's treatment of most of the Shona immigrants in England suggests that, like most Ndebeles (otherized in Zimbabwe for decades), he has a dislike for the Shona. For example, he pretends to be the owner of a house of which he is a caretaker and charges Shingi and other Shona immigrants high rent. He also dislikes Tsitsi, the Shona girl who gets pregnant by him, possibly because of ethnic differences. When the Shona traditional counselor, Mai Musindo, intervenes to save the marriage, Aleck rebels, and abandons Tsitsi and all other immigrants. Aleck's conduct resonates with the subject Mabuza in Zembe's study, who argues that past memories of maltreatment by some Shona tribesmen compel Ndebele immigrants to dissociate from the Shona in the West (103).

As much as Chikwava downplays the ethnic identities of his migrant characters, Aleck's political stance identifies him with the Ndebele ethnicity. A diehard supporter of the opposition, Aleck brings to the fore Bhabha's postulation of failure in the mimic about Robert Mugabe and African leaders (127) when he asserts that the ZANU PF government, like most African leaders, is oppressive, and this could be the reason why he flees to England to do odd jobs to survive. He tells the narrator that

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Mugabe is an "evil dictator" (123). The narrator brings in his fanatic ethnocentrism to defend Mugabe, but Aleck tells him to return home and see for himself the blatant human rights violations: rape, arson, and outright violence. Aleck's illustration demonstrates Bhabha's postulation with regard to the mimic's propensity to execute the colonizer's script with excessive zeal to cause the failure of his or her government.

The narrator is the minor mimic in the novel, as he firmly supports Mugabe and other African leaders who use ethnic mobilization to preserve power. His ambivalence and confusion are evident when he claims to hate England possibly because ethnic-based politics is at the low ebb, but it is the only place he can live to escape his criminal past. The narrator's dislike for immigrants such as Aleck stems from their identification with Ndebele nationalism, which has for decades challenged Mugabe's domination in Zimbabwe. The narrator therefore appeals to class to defend his ethnic demagogue, "[m]e I want to know what give some BBC the right to dismiss them presidents of one whole continent just like that . . . you have small knowledge of them African presidents that you are jumping to dismiss" (Chikwava 2009, 123). His ungrammatical English reiterates Bhabha's postulation on the imperfections of the mimic that gives the colonizer dominance over the colonized. While he thinks highly of himself and degrades Aleck's BBC job, the narrator idles around with dreams of his mother as the sole occupation (14–16). He therefore symbolizes African leaders such as Mugabe and Nkrumah who entertain fantasies about a lost Africa but do nothing to better the lives of African peoples. In the novel, BBC is an acronym for British Buttocks Cleaner, the drudgery for the desperate undocumented immigrants in Britain. Aleck had kept this a secret from the narrator and other tenants in the house, which came out later: he works in a care home where the elderly are looked after. The ethnic othering that Mugabe nurtured leads to a violent confrontation between the narrator and Aleck; Aleck has to leave the house.

Potentialities of Africanized System of Government: Mulwa's Inheritance

Mulwa's *Inheritance* juxtaposes the potentialities of authentic African leadership with mimics in the characters Kutula and Lacuna Kasoo. The play begins with scenes of the colonial administration, who is determined to exploit the African people of the fictional Kutula Colony. A conversation between Menninger (the governor's advisor) and Thorne Mackay (the governor) depicts the injustices of the British colonizer against the colonized. First is the denigration of African civilization;

Menninger describes Africans as animals as opposed to whites who are "individuals with a definite choice" (Mulwa 2004, 6). In an amazing reiteration of Rodney's postulation, Thorne asserts that whites came to civilize Kutulans as they could not keep pace with global modernization (9). King Kutula XV contends that despite introducing the material aspects of development, the whites denied Africans freedom, alienated them from their land, established a foreign system of government based on foreign rules (11), and exploited all their minerals for the benefit of the whites (12). As the homegrown leader of Kutula, King Kutula XV strives to set Kutula on an original path, which infuriates the colonizer to the extent that Menninger describes him as the most dangerous person.

Unlike Koomson, and the narrator (in the two novels) who dwell on mimicry, King Kutula identifies with the ways of his people and speaks to Governor Macay in proverbial English. Kutula's choice of African idiom reiterates Ngũgĩ's postulation on language as a colonial means of spiritual subjugation. According to Ngũgĩ (1986), culture is indistinguishable from language, which makes possible its genesis, growth, and transmission from generation to generation. To demonstrate reverence for African ways, King Kutula sustains a long conversation with a dozen proverbs, to Makay's astonishment. For instance, to express his yearning for Kutula's independence, he tells Mackay how the tortoise informed the elephant that though small it was, the compound was his (Mulwa 2004, 10). Governor Macay loses his nerve and blurts out, "[t]his proverbial drivel leads us nowhere" (11) as a testament to King Kutula's rejection of mimicry, which for Bhabha is the imitator's acceptance of "reformed and recognizable other" that yields nothing other than failure.

Indeed, King Kutula's original path enabled him to introduce a political structure based on African values such as religion, sharing, and concern for others (Mbiti 1970). He rejects Western imperialism and ensures equitable distribution of resources. Guided by honesty and love, Kutula prudently utilizes the resources of his nation without any propensity for embezzlement. His religious ideals (as Blyden argues concerning African personality) are exhibited by his humility; he lives a simple life, drives a Volkswagen, and refrains from borrowing (Mulwa 2004, 79). He introduces free education, lives within his means, and spends public resources to invest in productive activities (67). Unlike Nkrumah, whose subjects lament about inequalities, Tamina, one of the major characters, admits that Kutula's regime ensured justice and equality for all citizens (21). Nonetheless, all of King Kutula's gains are brought to an end when Menninger incites his son, Lacuna Kasoo, to

poison him to death (79). Fascinated by Western imperialism, Lacuna introduces a capitalist autocracy and takes a trajectory of Bhabha's mimicry.

Like the colonialists before King Kutula, Lacuna owns a mineral company where he exploits Black workers. They work for seven days and are fired if they take a moment off for prayer (45). While colonists whip and murder Africans (3), Lacuna assassinates his father and demands Judah Zen Mello (his loyal party member) kill his brother, Bengo. As Bhabha postulates, Lacuna executes the colonialists' script to extremes; he borrows in the name of the people and banks in accounts abroad. He leases public land to imperialists after they fail to pay loans. He is also in love with Judah Zen Mellow's daughter, Lulu, an underage girl. He locks her in the palace and makes advances at her (119). Mulwa parodies African leadership when Lacuna reveals that his plan to have sex with Lulu is a religious ritual to reverse his father's curse and extend the longevity of his regime. When the people arrange a peaceful demonstration, he orders soldiers to shoot them. Bhabha's association of mimicry with failure is evident when Lacuna is overthrown in a mass action. Nkrumah and Mugabe's regimes ended the same way.

CONCLUSION

African literature has played an essential role in the interrogation of poor governance that has pervaded the African landscape. While other humanities and social sciences point out the political challenges African countries face, it is evident that they are deficient in the dexterity that literature possesses. For instance, it was interesting how Armah and Mulwa depict sexual immorality among African leaders in *The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born* and *Inheritance*, respectively. Other humanities consign such aspects to the private space and hesitate to explore them, yet they affect governance. This study set out to examine the nexus between poor governance and colonial heritage in Africa as represented in Armah's *The Beautiful One Are Not Yet Born* (1968), Chikwava's *Harare North* (1983), and Mulwa's *Inheritance* (2005). In the study, it was found that there was a semblance between tactics employed by the colonial administration and post-independence African leaders in the three selected texts. In Ghana, Armah demonstrates how Koomson and the leader in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* accentuate the social stratification that the colonial administration thrived on. The nexus between political failure and leaning toward Western culture among African leaders was palpable. Nkrumah and Monsoon's mastery of Western language and

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culture creates confusion and a lack of clarity in their pan-Africanist vision. Further, it was apparent that mimicry is a site for the colonizer's control over the colonized because the new African leaders imitated the colonizer's culture, including borrowing to degrees that required the support of the West to try to salvage their economies. Lacuna pleads with Goldenstein, the imperialist, to give him more loans to feed his subjects. In Chikwava's *Harare North*, it was clear that Robert Mugabe exhibits ambivalence and confusion—typical features of mimicry—that hamper his leadership potential. There was a lot of semblance between the divide-and-rule policy of the colonial administration and Mugabe's handling of the Ndebele community after independence. In Mulwa's *Inheritance*, King Kutula's decision to shun blind imitation of Western imperialism sets him on an admirable path by leading the citizens humanely. However, he is assassinated; and his son's mimicry creates political crises in Kutula. As a mimic, Lacuna vacillates between pan-Africanism and imperialism and finally empties the public coffers to execute colonial attributes to excesses.

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