

**LEADERSHIP FAILURE AND THE HISTORICITY OF
SELECTED POSTCOLONIAL MALAWIAN PROSE
NARRATIVES**

BY

**EYOH ASUQUO ETIM
B.A. English (Uyo), M.A. English Literature (Uyo)
Matric No: 193999**

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CERTIFICATION

I certify that this work was carried out by Mr ETIM, Eyoh Asuquo, a PhD student in the Department of English, University of Ibadan, under my supervision.

Supervisor

Date

Emmanuel Babatunde Omobowale, PhD
Professor of Literature and Medical Humanities,
Department of English,
University of Ibadan,
Ibadan,
Nigeria.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my parents, Mr. and Mrs. Asuquo Etim Effiong, for supporting my educational aspirations over the years.

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ABSTRACT

Leadership failure is a perennially vexed issue in African postcolonial discourses, particularly in Malawi where Kamuzu Banda's dictatorship held sway for about three decades. Existing studies on leadership in Malawian literature are mostly motivated by the neocolonial binaries which hold Western colonialism largely responsible for most of the woes linked to leadership crisis, with marginal attention paid to the role of Africans in postcolonial leadership failure. This study was, therefore, designed to examine the issue of leadership in selected prose narratives that focus on Banda and post-Banda eras, as well as their aesthetics, in order to establish the shifting paradigm in current postulations on Africa's postcoloniality.

New Historicism was adopted as framework, while the interpretive design was used. Seven Malawian prose texts were purposively selected based on their reflections on postcolonial Malawi. The texts are Jack Mapanje's *And Crocodiles Are Hungry at Night*, Paul Theroux's *The Lower River*, Tiyambe Zeleza's *Smouldering Charcoal*, Felix Mnthali's *Yoranivyoto*, Steve Chimombo's *The Wrath of Napolo* and *Hyena Wears Darkness* and Al Gibson's *Mother of Malawi*. The texts were subjected to literary analysis.

Leadership failure manifests in all the selected texts in varying degrees. The dynamics of the social world constructed in the texts are dependent on the disposition of the characters in leadership positions. In the texts, both the Banda and post-Banda dispensations are shaped by the nature of leadership that is mostly devoid of colonial interferences. Dictatorial leadership, as portrayed in *And Crocodiles Are Hungry at Night*, *Smouldering Charcoal*, *Yoranivyoto* and *The Lower River*, is detrimental to the general growth and development of the citizens and society. This is reflected in the survival conditions of the people who are depicted as living in constant fear and abject poverty, and yet being coerced into silence and threatened with imprisonment and death by their leaders. The Banda regime denies the followership their basic rights as women are oppressed, children are not catered for, while the men who speak out are arbitrarily thrown into detention, murdered or are made to disappear in mysterious circumstances. The reverberating effects of the Banda leadership are depicted in *The Wrath of Napolo*, *Mother of Malawi* and *Hyena Wears Darkness* which narrate how the three decades of dictatorship by Banda continue to haunt post-Banda Malawian history and politics. Political power absurdly revolves around the same personalities in new political and ideological cloaks, while society is plagued by moral decadence, insecurity and political corruption. All the texts manifest postmodernist tropes such as dark humour, irony, paradox, parody, pastiche and magical realism to sharpen the aesthetic texture of the narratives.

The Banda and the post-Banda Malawian prose narratives deployed postmodernist tropes to demonstrate the tragic consequences of leadership failure on the postcolonial trajectory of Malawi.

Keywords: Leadership in Africa, Malawian literature, Kamuzu Banda, Dictatorial leadership, Post-Banda Malawi

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

. . . Mama Africa

Tell me

What's wrong?

- **Lucius Banda**

Background to the Study

It would appear, given the present state of affairs, that Africa has defied all prognoses aimed at bringing about an effective therapy for her many ills. If anything, all efforts made so far have tended to mushroom and mutate into more complex putative syndromes. Africa, then, continues to be one huge site of contesting maladies begging for attention and yet defying all care seemingly paid to it. The white colonialists who came to Africa in the 16th century saw the totality of her history as “one long night of savagery” (Achebe, 1988:30) which needed to be *en-light-ened* through the long-drawn project of civilisation manifesting itself as colonialism. The successes or failures of colonisation in Africa are debatable (Obiechina, 1978:51). However, despite its being subject to debate, available literature suggests that whatever gains or positive impacts colonialism might have brought were quickly obliterated by its numerous evils. Perhaps, this justifies the depiction of colonialism by Nzungola-Ntalaja (2008:53) as, “a system of economic exploitation, political repression and cultural oppression that not only denied Africans their citizenship rights, but also dehumanized them through and through.”

The current obsession with colonialism in the critique of African literature can be understood mostly within the context of the debilitating effects colonialism has had and continues to have on all facets of life on the continent. Africa's postcolonial discourse, itself motivated by the unfortunate incident of colonisation, is deliberately practical and utilitarian in its quest to rid Africa of residual colonial influences (a process that has come to be known as de-colonisation) and also regain the cerebral wholeness of the African selfhood which had hitherto been “otherised” by the ideologies of racism and colonialism. The fact that Africa at this moment is a site of contesting surgical

procedures is evident in the avalanche of theories and ideological correctives advanced by scholars and researchers within and outside her borders.

In the colonial period, African intellectuals and elites were mostly concerned with the physical eviction of the colonial masters from Africa's power space. This was buoyed by the credulous hope that the consequent shift of power would translate into a more meaningful existence for the generality of the African peoples. In other words, it was apparent that the colonial project of bringing light to Africa had failed, leaving Africans worse off than they were in the so called "pre-civilisation" era. To achieve the feat of [flag] independence then, African intellectuals-cum-nationalists needed to fashion a galvanising philosophy which would be potent enough to act as countervail to the inferior philosophy of colonialism. Fortunately, the ideology was found in Pan-Africanism and Négritude. The latter is what Irele (2007:203) defines as, "the literary and ideological movement of French-speaking black intellectuals, which took form as a distinctive and significant aspect of the comprehensive reaction of the black man to the colonial situation". On the other hand, the former is averred by Kuryla (2017: Par1) to be "the idea that peoples of African descent have common interests and should be unified".

With the mounting palpable sense of disillusionment that greeted the post-independence era, African ideologues soon found themselves caught up in critical multi-tasking. This is exemplified in their battle to keep the de-colonisation process on course while trying to defend Africa's political and economic forts against the encroaching monster, Neocolonialism. In this new dispensation, the battle for the soul of Africa branches into many fronts: linguistic, cultural, historical, political and economic, among others. In the neocolonial African state, not only are the writers and critics up against the sad legacies of colonisation, they also find themselves pitched against fellow black leaders bent on lording it over their subjects just like their former colonial counterparts had done.

This study opines that the problems of post-colonial Africa, though myriad, can be linked to the nature of her leadership. However, the actual interrogation of leadership has not gathered the much needed momentum in relation to the weight it possesses in

shifting the balance of Africa's destiny. It can be argued that the apparent dearth in the critique of African leadership is not unconnected with the multiple challenges that cropped up immediately after the physical departure of the colonial masters. Available literature shows how African intellectuals and thinkers were too preoccupied each with their own peculiar *idée fixe* to notice the import of leadership in the whole decolonisation equation.

For instance, Ngugi (1986) is obsessed with the language question in African literature. He is convinced, without any room for relativity of thought, that the best approach towards the decolonisation of Africa must be linguistic. Having cited how language exerts influence on the thinking capacity of the individual and how colonialism had been largely successful through the imposition of foreign languages, Ngugi (1986:27) concludes that "African literature can only be written in African languages". While Ngugi eventually stopped writing his imaginative works in English in preference to and reverence for Gikuyu, Achebe takes a relativist stance, informed by reality and practicality, in favour of English. Still, by far, Achebe's greatest contribution to the quest for decolonisation is cultural, especially his insistence that African history should be interrogated in order for Africans to "find out where we went wrong, and where the rain began to beat us" (Achebe, 2007:104). Not only this, Achebe is equally concerned with the art of drawing materials from the traditional environment and using them in his imaginative works. Thus, the exploitation of African oral tradition in modern African creative works was seen as a veritable weapon of decolonisation. In this, Soyinka appears to have surpassed others in the utilisation of myth and legends which abound in Yoruba folklore.

In all this, the main idea was to educate and empower the postcolonial Africans with the knowledge of their rich cultural heritage which their forebears possessed until the advent of colonialism. While this was on going in literature and criticism, writers like Walter Rodney wrote *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* while Frantz Fanon wrote *The Wretched of the Earth* published in 1972 and 1963, respectively. These writings took up the erstwhile colonial masters in their sordid acts in Africa and its effects on postcolonial Africa, posing scathing indictment of the white man, especially, in his complicity in the crippling of African economy. These acts were recorded from slavery

to the so called ‘legitimate trade’ and finally, the violence wrecked on the African mindset in a bid to keep it permanently timid and incapacitated.

The foregoing illustration became necessary to point out the numerous challenges that confronted Africa and other Third World countries and their thinkers right from the outset of the postcolonial discourse. By the time African thinkers realised that leadership could actually be the problem of postcolonial Africa (Achebe 1987), it was already too late. By then, dictatorship had spread cancerously across the continent, leading to an intense repression that robbed the writer-critic of his protesting voice. In fact, at the moment of writing this research, 2017, there are estimated to be twenty-one dictators in Africa, according to Planetrulers, an online source. The two questions now are: how can a continent of fifty-four countries develop when twenty-one of them are still grappling with dictatorship? In the remaining thirty-three democracies, how sound and qualitative is their leadership?

At this point, these two questions can be treated as rhetorical ones. This research would focus on the current trend in postcolonial criticism whereby solutions continue to be proffered for Africa’s challenges without much attention being paid to African leadership. A good example is a 2008 publication titled *The State in Africa: Issues and Perspectives*, edited by George Klay Kieh and Pita Ogabe Agbese. In this text, insightful attempts are made to place the postcolonial problematics of Africa in very clear and objective perspectives. However, leadership is not a major topic in any of the eleven chapters which comprise the work. Rather, it is mentioned in passing when the need arises to blame a class of people for a particular failing in Africa. For instance, in listing the internal factors which are meant to explain Africa’s poor economic performance, Boko (2008:120), in the sixth chapter of the work, enumerates such factors to include: “the lack of social capital; deficient public services; a lack of financial depth; high dependency on aid; the lack of the development of the human person (human factor engineering); ethnic factionalisation; nepotism; corruption and the lack of the credibility of economic reforms in the region.” Leadership as a factor is conspicuously omitted. Yet, it is obvious to any engaging mind that it takes sound and charismatic leadership to surmount the hurdles militating against Africa’s economic development.

Osha's (2002) thesis is indicative of the ongoing process of decolonisation even at the turn of the century. Osha (2002:17) that, "the multi-faceted problems posed by imperialism are such that Third World nations cannot establish any meaningful existence within the current global system unless a persistent programme of decolonisation in all areas of knowledge production is pursued and completed." It is quite apparent that there is a lacuna in the area of leadership interrogation in African postcolonial discourse. This gap could be ascribed to the multi-dimensional nature within postcolonial discourse itself. Thus, while it is true that the subject of leadership in Africa has been dealt with by a good number of African intellectuals, the attention paid to leadership is hardly commensurate with its weight in the scale of things. However, it is only fair to acknowledge the fact that there have been perceptive writers and critics who have decried the rot that has characterised African leadership in the post-independence era. Among such writers and critics include Soyinka, Achebe, Armah and Ngugi. A good example can be found where Ejiorfor and Kamalu (2011:175) subject Soyinka's *The Strong Breed* to a critique on leadership in relation to cultural frames in a bid to unveil "the human tragedies that occur as a result of abuse of institutional powers by the holders of such powers."

The realisation of the need to interrogate leadership in works of literature by Soyinka and other African writers must have been informed by the failure of all the ideals hitherto put forward to achieve the liberation of Africa. It must have been discovered that such lofty ideals were defeated by the inept and unconscionable leadership that perverted the continent after independence. Some critics have also faulted the workability of some of the ideologies earlier advanced for the liberation of Africa from colonial ideals and subjugation even after independence. For instance, Ugwuanyi (2003:11) maintains that, "the achievement of cultural renewal in Africa goes beyond the linguistic and conceptual strategies suggested by . . . thinkers" and goes on to suggest that "an effective programme of mental liberation and cultural renewal should take adequate cognisance of the multidimensional nature of the African crisis" (ii).

Ugwuanyi's position above does not only call for flexibility in the strategies to be adopted for African (de)liberation, but it also emphasises the need to be systematic, objective and practical in the application of ideas. In addition, these ideas should be

those that have the capacity to positively transform Africa. It is the belief of this research that an intensive and collective interrogation of leadership in African literature and criticism would be a step in the right direction in turning around the fortunes of the continent. As earlier hinted, the leadership issue that continues to plague Africa began right from the beginning but only got pronounced in the neocolonial period. This can be observed in works such as Achebe's *Arrow of God* (1964), *A Man of the People* (1966) and *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987). It could also be observed in Armah's *Two thousand seasons* as well as *The Beautiful Ones Are not yet Born* (1968). However, it should be noted that such portrayal of leadership concerns was part of the neocolonial African situation, where African leaders were largely seen as stooges that European superpowers used to perpetuate and execute their neocolonial agenda in Africa.

Achebe's *Arrow of God* inspired the publication of a critical anthology in 2017 which was edited by Joseph Ushie and Denja Abdullahi and titled *Arrows or gods? Essays on the Leadership Question in Chinua Achebe's Arrow of God*. The significance of this critical output is that it comes 53 years after the publication of *Arrow of God* in 1964 and it was supposed to mark the 50th anniversary of the novel in 2014, the year the conference to collect the papers was held. The implication is that the vexed issue of leadership which Achebe portrays in the work has continued to haunt not just the Nigerian state, but also the continent, so much so that the immortality of *Arrow of God* is reflected in the papers it generated. Ezeigbo (2017:7), in one of the articles in the book, notes the challenges connected with the critique of leadership in postcolonial Africa when she writes that Achebe in *Arrow of God*, "explores the idea of leadership and the levels of power devolution in a community under foreign rule but which is, at the same time, experiencing internal squabbles and communal conflict with its neighbour." Leadership in postcolonial Africa is, therefore, depicted as problematic because it is part of the challenges thrown up by external interferences in African affairs in addition to the existing ones. It is the foreigner that profits from these internal crises. This is a classic example of neocolonial critique of leadership in Africa which is given a fresh perspective by Eyoh (2018) in an inaugural lecture entitled *Nigerian Literature and the English Language in the Task of Nation-building: Revisiting Chinua Achebe's Vexed Issue of Leadership*. Eyoh examines leadership failure in Achebe's major works, including *Things Fall Apart*, *Arrow of God*, *No longer at Ease*, *A Man of*

the People and *Anthill of the Savannah*. In these works, as Eyoh rightly observes, Achebe creates dysfunctional leadership heroes – Okonkwo, Ezeulu, Obi Okonkwo, Odili, Chief Nanga and Sam - whose fates are linked with those of their society. The tragic destruction of these characters and inevitably their society is attributed by Eyoh to be due to their apparent lack of vision or foresight. For instance, Eyoh (2018:12-13) avers that Okonkwo is impatient, obstinate, rigid, myopic and resistant to the course or flow of history while Ezeulu fails to recognise the superiority of the Christian God to the pagan god Ulu!

So much can be found to quarrel with in the cultural implicatures of Eyoh's submissions on Okonkwo and Ezeulu, especially in light of ongoing attempts to cleanse Africa of residual colonial influences. In accusing Okonkwo of foolish resistance to historical forces, Eyoh pays a disservice to the metaphoric significance of Okonkwo's ultimate sacrifice which is characteristic of all indigenous peoples ever conquered and colonised by the West. Also, in assuming that the Christian God is superior to Ulu, Eyoh commits a cultural faux pas by re-admitting into cultural criticism the long-discarded notion of the superiority of one religion to another. It should be reiterated that postcolonialism as it is currently theorised is a form of resistance whose foundation is rooted in the actions of pioneering heroes like Okonkwo. Even the attempt by the current researcher at rearranging the binaries of the postcolonial theory, though meant to be self-searching, is also important in equipping African leadership and followership with the ontological courage to ward off the persistent onslaught of neocolonial hegemonic forces on the continent.

There are those critics who still perceive contemporary Africa as a neocolonial state. There are also those who subscribe to the view that the neocolonial coexists with the postcolonial. Thus, they tend to see no difference between, and no need to separate, the two. Although this issue will be handled in the later part of the chapter, it is necessary to point out that the ambivalence that characterises the understanding of neocolonialism and postcolonialism has contributed to the problem of knowing exactly who to hold responsible for the current state of Africa. It has also precluded any unidirectional focus on the quest to heal Africa of the wounds inflicted on her over the centuries. This is

where the idea for the re-arrangement of postcolonial binaries arises in this research. A deeper thrust into this thought will be done later in the theoretical framework.

Meanwhile, it is safe to say that ideas are universal and sometimes a single idea is caught by several persons at a particular time. This statement is necessary to the effect that there is a growing body of work on the question of leadership in Africa. This growth is, however, more dominant in the field of the social sciences, especially political science. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that African leadership needs to be overhauled if any meaningful development is to take place. Vickers (2014:7) explicitly states that, “leadership in most African states has been the target of much criticism” and that “it continues to be seen by many as inefficient, self-seeking and corrupt” (7). In an interview Vickers conducted, the respondent Emeka is reported as saying, “but as for leadership; this of course is the key to whatever will move forward in Nigeria and other African states” (Vickers 2014:13).

Dei et al (2016: 94-95) make a case for ethical leadership in postcolonial Africa, having reviewed several literatures lending credence to leadership determinism in Africa and setting aside the notion that adverse effects of colonialism and foreign aids are responsible for the dire state of contemporary Africa. They locate ethical leadership within the seven habits of ethical leaders which are strong character, a passion to do what is right, initiative, empathy, being a role model, a transparently active involvement in the decision-making process of the organisation or community and a complete understanding of the ethical culture of the community (Dei et al 2016: 90). The failure of African leaders to imbibe the virtues of ethical leadership, according to Dei *et al* (2016), has resulted in the poor leadership posture of the continent and, consequently, its woeful developmental state.

The understanding that leadership holds the key to Africa’s development is why this research engages the ongoing leadership discourses by interrogating the depiction of leadership in selected prose works from Malawian literature. It must be pointed out that Malawi has had its own fair share of bad leadership. An instance of this is during the thirty-year repressive regime of Dr Hastings Kamuzu Banda, the Life President, who ruled Malawi between 1964 and 1994. Even with the departure of Banda and the

ushering in of democracy and multi-party system, Malawi is shown to be still plagued by poverty and underdevelopment occasioned by poor successive leaderships. Malawi, then, is seen by the researcher as an instance of Africa's travails with inefficient leadership. Therefore, this justifies the study of selected Malawian prose texts in relation to leadership as proposed in this study. The need to analyse Malawian literature is predicated on the fact that it is a grossly understudied environment as is evident in the dearth of critiques and primary sources, especially recently published ones. The choice of Malawian prose is also informed not only by the study's emphasis in the genre, but also and even more by the fact that prose is the least critiqued of the three genres in Malawian literature.

The sum of what this section has argued is that although Africa has made some gains in the last fifty years, owing to the ideological commitment of her intellectuals, much is still left to be done in order to rescue the continent from the shackles of poverty and economic stagnation. One way of achieving this is by subjecting African leadership to critical scrutiny in works of arts. It is against this background that this research undertakes to study seven selected prose works from Malawian literature based on the reordered binaries of the postcolonial theory. The selected texts are Jack Mapanje's *And Crocodiles Are Hungry at Night*, Paul Theroux's *The Lower River*, Al Gibson's *Mother of Malawi*, Steve Chimombo's *The Wrath of Napolo* and *The Hyena Wears Darkness*, Felix Mnthali's *Yoranivyoto*, and Tiyambe Zeleza's *Smouldering Charcoal*.

Statement of the problem

Africa continues to grapple with issues which are connected to the obviously perennial leadership lacuna on the continent. This problem is peculiar in Malawi, where the thirty-year rule of Kamuzu Banda halted development in the land-locked country with the attendant consequences of wastage of resources, both human and material. The advent of democratisation and multi-party system from 1994 has not been able to bring about the much needed succour in the long-traumatised country. This is because the post-Banda Malawian leadership has been marred by impunity and political corruption. Most importantly, the paucity of works and criticism on Malawi literature and criticism in the African milieu and literary space has motivated this research.

Apart from the foregoing, it appears that the African political class have failed to learn from history have rather resorted to its expropriation and, where necessary, appropriation, to satisfy and achieve selfish goals to the detriment of the collective good and ideals of society. Thus, in querying leadership, history plays an important role, as African contemporary criticism is largely functional and social. Indeed, it is often difficult to have a rewarding critique of African literature if such a critique is divorced from its historicity. The constant manipulation of history by forces averse to truth has made it imperative for the critic to be “armed” with history as he or she goes to “war” with the texts. Existing studies on Malawian literature are preoccupied with history, especially in its critique of the dictatorial legacies of the Banda regime; the oppression of women through the appropriation of cultural heritages and traditional practices and the ravages of the HIV/AIDS phenomenon. In this research, however, these issues are theoretically tied to leadership and expounded upon outside the sphere of colonial influences.

The postcolonial theory needs to be repositioned to account for the emerging realities in contemporary Africa (Emenyonu, 2010; Nnolim, 2013 and Etim, 2016). Hence, the selected primary texts will be studied in this research from the repositioned perspective and format of the postcolonial theory, which places leadership against the oppressed structures in Malawian postcolonial discourse against the dominant discourse that critiques contemporary Africa based on European hegemony. The issue of reconciling the postcolonial with the postmodern persists; however, there are also critics who believe that the postmodern has been exceeded by post-postmodernism. The study has deemed it necessary to report on available literatures on post-postmodernism in the hope that they might assist future researchers who might be interested in studying what lies beyond the postmodern. However, postmodernist features in the primary texts will be analysed to account for the aesthetic texture of the texts.

Specifically, the primary concern of this research is to critically analyse Mapanje’s *And Crocodiles are Hungry at Night*, Theroux’s *The Lower River*, Gibson’s *Mother of Malawi*, Chimombo’s *The Wrath of Napolo*, Mnthali’s *Yoranivyoto*, Chimombo’s *Hyena Wears Darkness* and Zeleza’s *Smouldering Charcoal* using the repositioned binaries of the postcolonial theory.

Aim and objectives of the study

The aim of this research is to study the selected primary texts using the reordered binaries of the postcolonial theory which advocates the interrogation of leadership in African literature. The specific objectives of the research are to;

- i. analyse the historicity of the selected texts from the viewpoint of a repositioned postcolonial framework,
- ii. critique the identified oppressed and ‘otherised’ structures in the selected primary texts against the background of the perceived leadership failures in Malawi,
- iii. examine some of the postmodernist features in the selected primary texts as a way of auditing the aesthetics of the issues raised, and
- iv. make recommendations which could help rescue African leadership based on the findings of the study.

Methodology

This research is anchored on the assumption that lack of leadership is the root cause of Africa’s current postcolonial quagmire. Its thrust is on the critique of Malawian leadership in the seven primary texts selected for the study. These are Mapanje’s *And Crocodiles Are Hungry at Night*, Theroux’s *The Lower River*, Gibson’s *Mother of Malawi*, Chimombo’s *The Wrath of Napolo*, Chimombo’s *Hyena Wears Darkness*, Mnthali’s *Yoranivyoto* and Zeleza’s *Smouldering Charcoal*. Five of the primary texts were purposively selected based on freshness criterion and thematic suitability while two were selected based on availability and suitability because though they do not meet the five-year freshness criterion, they have the quality of the data needed for the research. All seven prose works are drawn from Malawian literature and they include a memoir, a biography, a collection of short stories and four novels. This explains the choice of “prose narratives” as reflected in the thesis title. The research adopts a critical approach to the interpretation of the selected primary data sources. The primary sources are paired for each chapter of the analysis based on the suitability of their data to the issue to be handled. It should be noted that the works of two non-Malawians and non-Africans have been selected and paired with those of Malawians. This is to reflect African and non-African perspectives in depicting the African postcolonial condition. It is also to reflect the non-Africans’ concerns over the fate of the post-colony and to see

whether these concerns are genuine or mere tourist fascination with Third World underdevelopment. The theoretical framework deployed for this research is Cultural Poetics or New Historicism, which affords the researcher ample theoretical space and ideological motivation to critique the postcolonial theory. It also gives this study the prerequisite historical “arms” with which it can systematically interrogate African leadership in works of literature with little or no recourse to colonialism as an overarching influence or factor. The research also draws from other relevant secondary sources such as journals, books and internet resources.

Significance of the study

There is the need to contribute to the ongoing discourse on how Africa can be critiqued out of her numerous challenges which cut across economic, political and cultural spheres. Specifically, there is also the need to join the emerging and ongoing critical conversations on how to reposition African leadership to make for effective management of human and material resources in order to drive the growth and development of the continent. This research will, therefore, contribute to the existing body of works on African leadership. The study will also generate critical materials in Malawian literature for the benefit of upcoming scholars who might be interested in Malawian literature or its linkages with other forms of dictatorship literature within or outside Africa. It should not be immodest to state that this research hopes to open up possible novel vistas in postcolonial researches, even as the researcher envisages the mounting of courses on African leadership in literature in the long run.

Scope of the study

The interrogation of leadership in Malawian literature is the focus of this research. However, the study is limited to seven selected prose works which are Mapanje’s *And Crocodiles are Hungry at Night*, Theroux’s *The Lower River*, Gibson’s *Mother of Malawi*, Chimombo’s *The Wrath of Napolo* and *Hyena Wears Darkness*, Mnthali’s *Yoranivyoto* and Zeleza’s *Smouldering Charcoal*. These selections notwithstanding, the analysis will also make use of other materials for cross-reference purposes. Again, the theoretical framework deployed for the research is New Historicism. The deployment of New Historicism allows for a dynamic study of historicity in the texts selected since Malawian literature is preoccupied with history. Most importantly, New Historicism is

also deployed to critically rearrange the binaries of the postcolonial theory, deemphasising the overbearing influence of the Centre, and exposing the hegemonic nature of the previous “Other” that has now assumed Selfhood.

Theoretical framework

Cultural Poetics, also known as New Historicism in America and Cultural Materialism in Britain, began in the early 1980s and flourished in the 1990s following the intense questioning of some of the assumptions of New Criticism by such critics as Stephen Greenblatt, Jonathan Dollimore and Jerome McGann. As a literary theory, cultural poetics owes a lot to the writings of Michel Foucault who views history as “neither linear nor teleological” (Dobie, 2009: 182) but, rather, as an ever-shifting narrative of the human epistemology. Kar (1995:76) observes that “New Historicism emerged as an inevitable reaction against the failures of both new critical and deconstructive approaches to grapple with the complex constitution of the literary text.” The limitation which the New Historicist critics noted in New Criticism bordered on its aversion to history. Where history was utilised at all, it merely served as background to the study of the work of art and played no part whatsoever in the main analysis. The implication of this type of criticism was that the life of the author, the society in which the work was produced, as well as the social circumstances surrounding the work were ignored in the creed of New Criticism.

New Historicism also is very critical of an earlier form of historicism or the traditional view of history as objective, finished and final. Rather, as Bressler (1994:181) observes, New Historicism “declares that all history is subjective, written by people whose personal biases affect their interpretation of the past.” History then became one of the ways or methods of making sense of human realities and not the only one. This means that history needs to be studied alongside other discourses, including literature, in order to have a complete or balanced view of reality. According to Chung-Hsiung (2006:2), “this is to say, history, in the postmodern era, has been regarded as a discourse constructed by ‘literary imagination’ and ‘power relations’; and in this sense it is ideological and subjective, always open to multiple inquiries and re-interpretation”. Perhaps, this is what is commonly referred to in New Historicism as “the textualisation of history” because, for Lynn (1994:124), history is textual. This is so because the

“past” is not readily accessible; what is available is the “story” and it is made up of words, that is, language. This technicality in the perception of the past (history) as a text blurs the hitherto drawn lines aimed at separating history from literature in the tenets of New Criticism.

As noted by Dobbie (2009) and Bressler (1994), New Historicism has also gained from the works of Clifford Geertz, especially in the deployment of the term “thick description”. This term acknowledges the contextualisation of signs in the realisation of meaning. Thus, a particular sign is capable of having different meanings as the context changes. However, in “thin description”, the sign is isolated and, therefore, becomes decontextualised. The incorporation of Geertz’s terms into the tenets of New Historicism serves to emphasise the need to pay attention to details, so that nothing is overlooked in the quest for harvesting meaning in any critical instance. However, the concept of “thick description” is that which is favourable to the theoretical posturing of this research. Apart from Anthropology, New Historicism has also been inspired by Marxism, especially by its conception of history as always shifting, depending on the cultural dynamics of the time and the individuals who participate in interrogating it.

Indeed, an interesting aspect of New Historicism is its power distribution and politics. To understand the power relations that operate in the theory, one must understand the concept of the “Other”, which is the spurned and the criminalised outsider. It is through the “Other” that the individual or the group realises the power of the self and the morality to hold that power. However, in the creed of New Historicism, the “Other” also constitutes a power base of its own, which has to be listened to for a more balanced discourse to take place. The “Other” in this context constitutes the silenced and the oppressed, whose version of history (story) is usually ignored or left out of the grander narratives by the victors of existential battles. This inquest has found it necessary to adopt New Historicism for its analysis because apart from helping to “bring both literary and non-literary discourses into creative juxtaposition, so as to show how social power and historical conflict permeate the textuality of a society’s literature” (Milner and Browitt, 2002:44), it will also allow the voices of the poor, the oppressed women and unfortunate children to be heard. Through this, it would enhance the objectivity of the discourse. The interdisciplinary nature of New Historicism has also endeared the

theory to this study, as the research straddles literature, history, politics, philosophy and culture.

A rereading of the postcolonial theory through the framework of new historicism

At the fourth Postcolonial Narrations Conference held in Munich, Germany, in October 2016, Eyoh Etim read a paper entitled: ‘ “Post-postcolonialism”: Theorising on the Shifting Postcolonial Paradigms in African Fiction’. The research offers its ideas on post-postcolonialism as a rereading of the postcolonial theory based on the thoughts of the above cited paper. What then is Post-postcolonialism? Post-postcolonialism infers “after postcolonialism” and it is a term whose idea this enquiry has utilised to suggest a paradigm shift in the postcolonial African discourse. It is assumed that postcolonialism has met its aporia and has thus dismantled itself. This situation thus necessitates a re-assessment, refocusing and repositioning of the theory. Even when viewed from the angle of temporality, the term “postcolonial” is seen to have become, more or less, metaphorically automatised. This makes it imperative to fashion a newer, fresher and a more foregrounded (estranged) terminology to account for the changing direction and focus of Africa’s postcolonial criticisms, as a way of responding to emerging realities.

The fact is that right from its inception, the postcolonial critique has been plagued by its over-excitement at confronting the Centre. Noting this, George (2007: 452) writes, “from its beginnings, African literature has always been seen as a function of the history of colonialism.” This preoccupation with colonial history is not without its own merits. Indeed, colonialism left an enduring scar on the body politic of the continent and, as it is with all scars, no amount of healing can erase it, except, maybe, plastic surgery, which in itself could be dangerous and injurious to the identity of the subject. The ensuing aggressive campaign to de-colonise Africa which recorded huge successes, especially in the political and cultural scenes, paid exaggerated attention to the enemy without, leaving the enemy within to feed fat, grow robust and prosper freely. Myriads of texts have been written which do not hide who the real enemy is. Chief among such texts is Walter Rodney’s *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, published in 1972. The book’s title illuminates its contents but a brief quotation will leave nothing in doubt: “For the only great men among the unfree and the oppressed are those who struggle to

destroy the oppressor” (par1). There in the quote, there is no question as to who the oppressed and the oppressors are.

In the sphere of literature, the Troika’s publication titled *Toward the Decolonization of African Literature*, in 1980, wages a fairly successful war to recapture African literature and cultural critique from the captivity of the Eurocentric soldiers. The ambitious objective spelt out in the introductory part of the work gives some level of insight into its treatise: “The cultural task in hand is to end all foreign domination of African culture, to systematically destroy all encrustation of colonial and slave mentality, to clear the bushes and stake out new foundations for a liberated African modernity” (Chinweizu et al, 1985:1). The foregoing are very lofty ideals whose successes can only be judged by the foundation on which the current research rests. Ngugi wa Thiong’O, one of Africa’s gallant literati, took the battle to the foes of Africa’s liberation from the linguistic and mental flanks. One of his landmark publications is *Decolonising the mind: the politics of language in African literature*, published in 1986. So faithful has been Ngugi’s belief that the war to rid Africa of colonial marks could best be won through the instrumentality of language that he stopped writing in English. This is evident in “A statement” he issues in *Decolonising the Mind*: “In 1977 I published *Petals of Blood* and said farewell to the English language as vehicle of my writing plays, novels and short stories. All my subsequent creative writing has been written in Gikuyu language” (Ngugi, 1986: xiv).

Thirty-nine years and a change of name later, it is not likely that many writers have followed Ngugi’s dance step in the language symphony. It cannot be ascertained how faithful Ngugi, himself, has been in keeping to his vow. Indeed, most critics have tagged this particular position of Ngugi extreme and unrealistic, albeit a laudable ideal. It is actually Achebe’s linguistic assumptions that most African writers and critics have come to rely upon in the unifying but onerous task of defending African literature and criticism against the external oppressor. According to Achebe (1975),

The price a world language must be prepared to pay is submission to many kinds of use. The African writer should aim to use English in a way that brings out his [or her] message best without altering the language to the

extent that its value as a medium of international exchange will be lost. He [or she] should aim at fashioning out an English which is at once universal and able to carry his [or her] peculiar experience (100).

Not only has Achebe made significant contribution to the language question in African literary criticism, but he has also made invaluable statements that have helped in no small measure in concretising Africa's position in the postcolonial literary discourses. It is one of such statements that has given impetus to the current research. In it Achebe states that "an African creative writer who tries to avoid the big social and political issues of contemporary Africa will end up being completely irrelevant like the absurd man in the proverb who leaves his house burning to pursue a rat fleeing from the flames" (Achebe, 1975:78). For Achebe, therefore, while it is expedient for writers and critics of African literature to chase away the colonialists that keep haunting the grounds of Africa's literary castles and towers, it is equally important to not lose sight of the home-grown ghosts that habitually scare away Africa's development.

Nevertheless, a greater part of the oeuvre of most African writers has been preoccupied with the diabolic effects of the African colonial experience. The argumentative posturing of this paper in the next set of paragraphs is that there has been no point in the history of Africa's colonial subjugation that Africans did not play symbolic roles.

Critiquing colonialism, neocolonialism and postcolonialism through the prism of the reordered postcolonial binaries

The continent of Africa has been one sorry site of foreign domination, economic rape and political abuses dating back to the earliest known history of the modern world. Colonialism itself occurred in three phases – classical colonialism (orchestrated by the Greco-Roman conquest of Egypt); slavery and, finally, the legitimate trade (Heldring and Robinson, 2012). Even in the 21st century, Africa still grapples with the debilitating aftermaths of colonial rule, including the internally nurtured ones, one of which Chinweizu's (2013) publication refers to as "Caliphate Colonialism". This ideology of colonialism is said to be in operation in Nigeria with the sole aim of furthering and perpetuating the political and economic interests of a section of the country.

Then came along what generally has been referred to as “flag independence” which enthroned puppetry at the leadership helm of the continent. It is the position of this researcher that this kind of leadership has endured in Africa and continues to constitute a most formidable barrier to Africa’s development. However, the major policy of this research is to emphasise the collaborative role of Africans in the ruinous state of the continent from *slave-ism* to postcolonialism.

Olaudah Equiano’s account (1789) is relied upon on the issue of Africa’s complicity in the criminality tagged slavery. In the first place, Equiano does not deny that slavery existed in pre-colonial Africa, but rather rationalises on its humane nature compared to the one devised and executed by the *British* European nations. Indeed, although attracted by the offering of irresistible incentives, the middle men in this inhuman commerce were mostly Africans. They even went as far as initiating wars at the slightest provocation just to find convenient excuses to take prisoners and turn them into slaves. Equiano (1789:18) reports that “these battles . . . were incited by those traders who brought the European goods [slaves].” He also added that “such mode of obtaining slaves in Africa was common”, including kidnapping, which was the mode in which Equiano himself and his sister were taken as slaves.

During colonialism, some Africans were willing tools in the hands of the colonial masters, while others betrayed outright the cause for the emancipation of Africans from the shackles of colonialism. Unfortunately, most of these stooges and betrayers went on to become leaders and elites such as warrant chiefs, interpreters and court officials. Finally, when the Europeans decided to withdraw physically from the scene, they replaced themselves with these dignified “houseboys”, whose leadership has endured up until this moment in Africa. Indeed, from all indications, Africa is being ruled mostly by subservient stooges and betrayers of their countries. The case of Mugo in Ngugi’s *A Grain of Wheat* is very typical. Ngugi writes in the novel that, “Life was only a constant repetition of what happened yesterday and the day before” (Ngugi, 1967:237). The lesson that interests this research is Mugo’s courage to take responsibility for his actions – an action which not only leads to his spiritual freedom but also brings about a new beginning for the country (Ngugi 1967:235). Mugo’s commendable act of confession is an exemplary ideal that has eluded the realities of

most African political situations because these sellouts have gone on to be leaders even to contemporary times. Abena, one of the characters in Armah's *Two Thousand Seasons*, observes:

Our chiefs, our leaders, they have bellies and they have tongues. Minds they do not have. That is the white destroyers' happiness; that is why the white destroyers will exhaust their long knowledge of murder to keep our rotten chiefs, our bloated leaders on top of us. No one sold us but our chiefs and their hangers-on (Armah, 1975:146).

With the type of leaders limned above, the neocolonial doom of most African states was sealed the moment these leaders assumed positions in the post-flag independence Africa. Literatures abound that account for all the atrocities of these neocolonial African leaders and how society has fared during their reign. Plagued by ineptitude and sheer illiteracy, the neocolonial leaders merely stepped into the shoes of their erstwhile masters. They became those who did the colonialists' bidding and did so by oppressing their fellow Africans. The argument is often that these leaders were placed there to act as agents of the departed Europeans. While this might be true, the fact remains that these people are Africans and this necessitates a re-examination of our critical canon because the theory on the will of man does not allow one to excuse these sellouts in any way. This is why Ojukwu (1989:4) asserts, "There is no doubt that a great deal of errors can be blamed on the post-independence leaders . . ."

A thin line seems to separate the neocolonial discourse from the postcolonial one. In fact, the two are most times discussed side by side, though for some writers, the term "post-colonial" designates those discourses that straddle issues from colonialism up to the current issues in the critique of African literature. For instance, Ashcroft et al (1989:2) states: "we use the term 'post-colonial', however, to cover all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present." The term "postcolonial" seems to embrace a time-lapse but problematises its own definition and scope in line with "post-colonial". Thus, that while it can denote those discourses that emerged at the expiration of colonialism, it can also connote the continuous effects of colonialism on Africa even when it is supposed that colonialism had long ended. Most novels that could be termed "postcolonial" are preoccupied with this illustration –

that Africa is going through her present hell because of the structures laid and left by the colonial masters and sustained by neocolonial African leaders. This is, indeed, the core aspect of the “writing back” tenets. The question, in the opinion of this research, is – when will Africans begin to write to themselves.

Though this particular discourse has dominated literary works and criticism, it is not without an opposing view. In his 2010 publication entitled *How Africa Underdeveloped Africa*, Stanley Igwe (2013:13) states that, “the only acceptable explanation for African poverty is to say that it is caused by the lingering effects of colonialism” and that “this is the only explanation a public figure can speak of without having his career and reputation intentionally destroyed”, but that “this does not make it true.” It is interesting that Igwe attributes the pitiable state of Africa today to corruption, which is largely made possible by the compromising leaderships on the continent. It is obvious that, for Igwe and a good number of critics, Africans have themselves to hold responsible for the current problems besetting the continent. This view is succinctly captured by Mour Ndiaye in Amina Sow Fall’s *The Beggars’ Strike* when he says: “We are now the ones responsible for the destiny of our country. We must oppose anything which harms our economic and tourist development” (Fall, 1979:18).

Agbo’s (2010) publication is entitled *How Africans Underdeveloped Africa: A Forgotten Truth in History*. The work does not only share publication dates with Igwe’s work, it also shares ideological and argumentative affinities with Igwe’s critique. Like Igwe, Agbo believes that the traditional postcolonial notion of the empire writing back to the Centre is no longer sustainable, instead, it is time the empire began writing to itself. In other words, the act of constantly blaming the West for the problems in the postcolony is no longer realistic. In his review of Agbo’s work, Igbuzor (2011) sees the publication as a major contribution to the ongoing conversations on the causes of Africa’s underdevelopment, especially its deviation from the dominant views which usually vilify the West for causing Africa to remain perpetually underdeveloped through the instrumentality of slavery, colonialism, aids, grants and loans. Abdulazeez (2014) in an article entitled “How Africans Underdeveloped Africa” is convinced that Rodney’s viewpoint on Africa’s reason for remaining underdeveloped can longer be sustained in the light of emerging realities. In fact, Abdulazeez is of the opinion that had Rodney

lived till this moment in Africa's history, he would have been forced to write another work to express a new point of view. Abdulazeez minces no words in submitting that, currently, Africans are the cause of Africa's underdevelopment.

It is this study's position that this blame game has gone on for too long, and that it is time Africa moved on, in theory and in praxis. The research is also of the view that the dominant perception of Western colonialism as the cause of Africa's mournful sociopolitical and socioeconomic situation had long set itself up as a grand narrative pleading to be deconstructed and decentred. But first, there is need to review the existing postcolonial theories in relation to the New Historicist framework in order to appreciate why there has been a paradigm shift, which should warrant the reordering of the postcolonial binary structures.

Cultural studies or Postcolonialism and Cultural Poetics or New Historicism operate on common grounds of politics and history. Barber (2007:671) declares, "postcolonial criticism has a political bite; it turns the searchlight back to the center and exposes the agenda underlying its claims to a universal literary humanism." Barber's statement justifies our earlier assertion that postcolonial criticism is "Centre-centred". Beginning from Edward Said in his *Orientalism* and *Culture and Imperialism* published in 1978 and 1994, respectively, to other notable critics such as Homi Bhabha, Frantz Fanon, Elleke Boehmer and Gayatri Spivak, among others, the objective has always been to expose the hegemonic nature of the Centre in relation to the periphery or the Other. Boehmer (1995:21) states that "the concept of the Other, which is built on the thought of, inter alia, Hegel and Sartre, signifies that which is unfamiliar and extraneous to a dominant subjectivity, the opposite or negative against which authority is defined."

Nevertheless, there is a stain of subjectivity of all history in the New Historicist creed because personal biases usually colour each historical narrative. This explains why, according to Bressler (1994:181), New Historicism "highlights the interrelatedness of all human activities, admits its own prejudices, and gives a more complete understanding of a text." Again, history, as declared by Lynn (1994:124, 128), is textual, thus making literature to become "as much a context for history as history is for literature."

One can observe from all this that the realities of African history in contemporary times are not adequately reflected in the existing postcolonial theories and literature. Some critics have, in recent times, noticed this lacuna and have called on other writers and critics to consider charting new directions for African literature and criticism. McClintock (2007:628) maintains that, “the way out of colonialism is forward.” Indeed, the postcolonial binaries of self-other, metropolis-colony and centre-periphery, among others, can no longer account for the existing realities in the postcolonial discourse of African literature. The incident of globalisation and its attendant consequence of multiculturalism have ensured the blurring of certain ideological lines and divides, thus closing and rendering hitherto acknowledged cultural lacunas insignificant. Perhaps, this is what Appiah (2007) had in mind when stating thus:

If there is a lesson in the broad shape of the circulation of cultures, it is that we are all already contaminated by each other, that there is no longer a fully autochthonous echt – African culture awaiting salvage by our artist (just as there is, of course, no American culture without African roots). And there is a clear sense in some postcolonial writing that the postulation of a unitary Africa over and against a monolithic West – the binarism of Self and Other – is the last in our shibboleths of the modernizers that we must learn to live without (Appiah, 2007:663).

It is apparent that the African postcolonial situation in the 21st century has become too complex and subjective to be analysed using the existing framework. Thus, this research heeds the call of Jones (2007:412) that, “the specialist students of literature have the additional task of applying their minds in a special way to the critical examination of African literature in order to reveal the qualities of individual works and to help establish general critical standards” by attempting to fashion what it terms as “a reordered postcolonial discourse” in African literature. This reordering hopes to account for the current realities on the continent. Discourse in this sense is a social language which, in the conceptualisation of Tyson (2015:270), is brought about by specific cultural conditions at a particular time and place and which is marked by a given mode of decoding human experience.

Charles Nnolim (2006:4-5), while decrying “the defensive nature of our literatures and our preoccupation with re-establishing the African personality, glancing backwards to a glorious past,” urges African writers to “look forward and project a forward-looking utopia for Africa, not the backward-looking utopia of the 20th century that merely healed our psychic wounds.” It is interesting to note that Nnolim’s statement is among the “New Voices” that are “emerging from all parts of the African continent not only to reinforce the voices of the generations before them, but to also reveal new realities, visions and concerns of Africa and its people” (Emenyonu, 2010: xii). In another instance, Nnolim (2013:27&29) is disillusioned by the fact that “African literature in the twentieth century seemed to have reached a point of mild exhaustion.” He goes on to mandate “our writers” to, “create a new Africa, a new spirit of optimism, an Africa full of promises, able to feed its teeming populations, an Africa with a healthy and vibrant people not dependent on Europe and America.”

While this researcher sympathises with Nnolim’s position on the seeming lack-lustre state of African literary criticism in recent times, it must point out that there are hidden dangers in the rush for the utopianisation of African literature and criticism. Such an idyllic act runs the risk of creating false comfort in a continent where poverty and illiteracy are rife. Who will read and understand science fiction in African literature when most of the schools in Africa are ill-equipped? Where is the incentive to introduce a utopian-science-consuming literary culture in a continent still ravaged by extreme poverty? Nnolim should understand that when most European science fictions were written, most of those nations were already colonising other nations of the world. If new theories must be enacted for African literature, as urged by well-meaning critics like Chinyere Nwahunanya, Nnolim, Emenyonu and Izevbaye, such theories must consider the need to quickly address the lingering leadership lacuna in African politics and institutions. It should be a comprehensive theory which aims to “establish procedures for the evaluation and control of critical opinion” (Izevbaye, 1971:422). At the same time, it should make sense of the African condition and account for the realities of African history and politics. In an era driven by global framework of interdependence, Africa cannot afford to remain in her perpetual posture of dependence. As Covey (2004:50) rightly posits, “interdependence is a choice only independent people make.”

A brief critique of the postcolonial theory

The postcolonial theory has come under intense attack and questioning in recent times. It has been criticised for depending too much on literary data, giving power too much attention and making resistance to subjugation seem impossible (E-Notes, 2015). Critics have also made a case for the postcolonial theory to become a more empirical and a historically foregrounded field of study. This research, however, is of the view that the charge of the postcolonial theory being overly dependent on the literary text is mitigated by the deployment of history in the interpretation of literary works, especially history as conceived in New Historical hermeneutics. This is because, in many ways, history factualises fiction. This explains why this study is endeared to New Historicism as a theoretical framework in critiquing the historicity detained in the selected primary texts.

Again, postcolonialism is usually guilty of what it claims to repudiate, which are mystification and moralism. Postcolonialism's over-preoccupation with colonialism is, perhaps, its major weakness. This can be seen, especially, in the light of the fact that countries like Malaysia and Singapore have since joined the league of developed nations (economically viable) while African countries which gained independence at about the same time with these countries continue to bemoan their fate by blaming the West for all their problems. McClintock (2007), as already quoted, insists that the only way out of colonialism is forward. Many critics have noted the lacklustre texture of the postcolonial theory and critique. Nnolim, for instance, says it has reached a point of mild exhaustion or despair and is, thus, in dire need of rejuvenation (Nnolim, 2013:27, 29).

In addition to the above, a lot of critics have quarrelled over the "post" in postcolonialism. As reported by Narasingha (2014:22), "while some scholars put emphasis on the 'post' of postcolonialism and consider it as a temporal marker of the decolonization process, others question the chronological separation between colonialism and its aftermath claiming that postcoloniality (or the postcolonial condition) had begun with colonisation rather than after decolonization". It should be added that this controversy is what lies at the heart of the weakness of the postcolonial theory. This is because it creates room for lack of direction, focus and dips the theory in

fatal ambiguity and ambivalence. This inquest insists that the “post” in postcolonialism is already overloaded and, thus, needs a second “post” as a stylistic, ideological and critical gesture in a bid to create and negotiate a new discourse in African criticism, as theorised in Etim (2016). In this study, however, the term ‘postcolonialism’ is revisited, critiqued and repositioned to shoulder the burden of the emerging discourses that reject the West as the sole agency in Africa’s postcolonial problems. Apart from this, postmodernism which gave an ideological motivation for the postcolonial discourse has already been exceeded by post-postmodernism as theorised by Kirby (2006), Iggers (2009) and Baya (2013), among others. It is apparent then that postcolonialism also requires restructuring and repositioning to accommodate and match emerging realities and discourses. It should be noted, however, that in this thesis, ideas on post-postcolonialism are offered as a rereading of the postcolonial theory, and not as a way of exceeding it.

Appiah (2007) sees the postcolonial theory as a commodity, a cultural product through which a group of Africans and Western intelligentsia sell Africa to Europe and Europe to Africa. Many critics believe that Africans should begin to fashion theories that account for the realities in Africa of contemporary times, as most of the theories which are being bandied in Africa’s critique-scape and cultural space have European marks on them. It should be noted that as at 2008, postcolonial critics like San Juan had begun deploying terms or phrases such as “after postcolonialism” and “beyond postcolonialism”. Young (2003:199) is of the view that the “colonial discourse analysis as a general method has reached a stage when it is in danger of becoming oddly stagnated”. He also notes that the postcolonial theory has got to a dilemma on what exactly to question in the postcolonial discourse and this has led to lethargy in the problems and methods developed. In other words, for Young (2003:199), the postcolonial critics have left off questioning the scope and limitations of their propositions.

In considering what might come after postcolonialism, Dauner and Foo (2018:2) call for an examination of the limits of post-colonial theory with an effort geared towards answering queries such as: “Where does the postcolonial theory cease to function as a mode of analysis or thinking about the world? How and why are these limits created?

What lies beyond these limits and how does it influence our current understanding of identity and place?” In fashioning the ideals of a revitalised postcolonial framework, the study stresses the fluidity that characterises the Centre/Periphery binary structure. At the same time, it rejects the idea by some postcolonial critics that what lies beyond the postcolonial theory is transnationalism, multiculturalism and globalisation. Recent sociopolitical developments in different parts of the world attest to the failure of these lofty concepts. This is because Brexit in the UK, the far right Movement across Europe with its attendant anti-immigration stance, and the gradual rise of Trumpism in the United States imply that the process of re-nationalism is on course and that Africans are no longer welcomed in these places. The available option is for Africans to return home and interrogate their leadership until Africa (re)gains her pride of place in the world.

Re-arranging the postcolonial binary structures

At this point in her history, Africa requires a strong ideological base from which she could launch herself back into the world. Such an ideology should be self-conscious without necessarily being narcissistic. This is a time when globalisation, multiculturalism and postnationalism have been shaken by such exotic cultural forces as Brexitism and Trumpism. Thus, such an African ideology ought to be like those of the Pan-Africanists and the Negritudists but taken beyond their purely cultural and intellectual concerns into a realm of tackling economic waste and stagnation, leadership vacuum, political insensibility, political instability and the insensitivity of those in power. This is in keeping with Izevbaye’s (1971:28) assertion that “the formation of the contemporary African critical attitude rests largely on the relations of arts to society.” To put it lightly, such a theory should be practical, bearing in mind the yielding of the right results in its praxis. Furthermore, such a theory should emphasise the importance of sincere and accountable servant-leadership on the continent as a veritable means of African liberation from its own chains, first and later the residual yet powerful fetters of imperialism. Olaniyan (2007:640) notes this when he states that, “The atrocities committed in the last 30 years by many African leaders in the name of the sacredness of the nation are still part of our contemporary history.” Therefore, such a theory should reflect and emphasise a sense of self-conscious critique of Africa by Africans, according to Olaniyan (2007). This critique should also be targeted at the seemingly unimpeachable nature of bad leaders and leadership in African countries. These refer to

“compromised leaders whose interests prove to be fundamentally different from the aspirations of their subjects” (Ogwude, 2012:103).

Apart from the foregoing, such a theory should attempt achieving poetic synchronisation between ideological assumptions and textual realities because current observations have indicated that there are gaping disparities between existing literatures and existing theories. In other words, in a bid to portray the marginalised nature of the “Others”, the texts have ended up as devices for the subversion of the domineering nature of the supposed margins. The repositioned postcolonial study of literature aims to uncover such subtle subversions inherent in the text. A situation where a supposedly postcolonial novel dramatises the demonic acts of an African dictator and the theory wants everyone to believe that the cause is the Centre, can no longer be accepted. As it has already been implied, such an interpretation is too defensive and escapist to be realistic. The reality as of now is that most African oppressors no longer represent foreign interests but only their own, the continuous influence of the Western neocolonial project on the continent notwithstanding.

Re-visiting the definition of postcolonial literature

Dobie (2009:208), in her writing, opines that “The broadest view of postcolonial literature is that it is the literature written in English by people in formerly colonized countries, some of it authored by the colonizers and their descendants, but more of it by those colonized.” However, it should be noted that a postcolonial definition of literature cannot, and must not, ignore literature written in indigenous African languages, even though, as Ngora (1982:6) notes, the literature written in vernacular “is accessible only to a small portion of Africa.”

Postcolonial literary work also includes all artistic contents with African sensibilities in the new media, including films and performances. Postcolonial literature is a socially-committed literature, a history-conscious literature and a society-transforming literature. It is a literature that places art at the service of society. Postcolonial literature is at once African-conscious and world-focused. It is concerned about the deplorable state of Africa at the present and aimed at galvanising the needed actions that would transform Africa and place her on the same par with her peers across the world. This is

based on the ideals of the framework itself, which will be unveiled in the definition of postcolonialism.

Postcolonialism, as redefined in this thesis (and for the purpose of this study), is a forward-looking, inward-looking and soul-searching framework, which is mostly concerned with re-assessing, re-examining, re-evaluating and re-positioning Africa's postcolonial discourses. It is a framework that places Africa and Africans first, especially her political and economic interests and dignities. Postcolonialism is a periphery-searching and margin-centering theory. And in centering the margin, the theory hopes to expose the oppressors among the oppressed. It is a theory that creates a centre out of the Otherness of Africa. Such a re-Othering and re-Centering is based on the deconstruct-able self-posturing of the previous binary structures which, from all indications, can no longer sustain our postcolonial realities. This is what Appiah (2007: 656) asserts when he writes that, “. . . the first and the last mistake is to judge the Other on one's own terms.” The constant flux in the binary relations of Centre/Other is what the mechanics of postcolonialism emphasises.

Postcolonialism is technically deployed to infer “pastcolonialism”. *Pastcolonialism* does not mean that the influences or effects of colonialism cannot still be felt in Africa (indeed, it would be foolhardiness to reason so). Rather, it is used to infer that colonialism did pass, and that, at least, political independence was achieved. The framework also holds that political independence is a veritable tool to deploy in achieving other independences – especially economic and cultural independence. But why the delay? Why the palpable sense of stagnation? Why the seeming helplessness and frustration regarding the African progress. The answer lies in the faulty nature of the political independence itself and the inability of the succeeding generation of African leaders to turn Africa around. In postcolonialism, the terms “suspension of belief” and “belief of doubt” are used simultaneously to assume, even for a moment, that the western colonial influence had since ceased, however seemingly escapist; delusionary and illusionary such a belief might appear. Such a suspension of dominant belief would allow for a new semantic horizon on the possibility of Africa being held largely responsible for her many postcolonial woes. In this sense, the “post” in postcolonialism signifies a “pause”, hence, “pause-colonialism”. Such a poetic pause of

the colonial discourse aims at making way for the beginning of a new discourse in which the West as a factor in Africa's woeful tales is poetically suspended, deemphasised and relegated to the collective unconscious of our social language. Here, African leadership occupies the consciousness of the critics and the critiques.

Postcolonialism, as redesigned, urges criticism to look beyond the race and bourgeoisie-proletariat relationships between Africans and the Western nations to the ethnicity; corruption, inept leadership and the various oppressive class structures within the African continent, which are more immediate and directly impacting. It is only after these societal foes have been defeated that Africa can then unite to face their external aggressors. What the new postcolonial discourse says in a nutshell is that Africa needs to put her house in order before presenting her case at the international scene. Postcolonial literature and criticism are deeply political because they see a direct relationship between Africa as a failed state and the failed leadership on the continent. Postcolonialism decries dictatorship, as it is detrimental to the health of African politics and economy. It also condemns mutative democracy whose roots lie deep in the well-manured soil of military dictatorship. It is sad to aver that most parts of Africa practise militarised democracy – a mere shedding of camouflage for mufti. Africa cannot grow this way. This explains why Africa needs a self-responsible and self-responsive framework as proposed in this study.

A statement on assumptions and methodology

In the restructured postcolonialism, the term “de-colonisation” assumes a new and significant paradigmatic visage. It connotes the idea that Africa should look beyond the pains, shadows, ghosts and scars of colonialism, because it is only by so doing that she can begin to heal. Holding on to a mentality oppressed by colonialism will only aggravate Africa's problems. Instead, it is time Africa picked herself up and began to take responsibility for her contemporary troubles. De-colonisation also implies disencumbering Africa of its internal colonialist elements, which have, over the years, structured themselves along points of power on the continent. This research can boldly say that most of the problems that Africa is grappling with at the moment are not caused by Europe. The few ones, of which imperialism can be held responsible, are made possible by African collaborators who, unfortunately, are in leadership positions.

Postcolonialism is organised around time and power binaries whose Dominant Self is a previous Other. Here, the Other is a *dialecticality* that has been problematised. Dobie (2009:183), having stressed the need of examining the Other in any discourse, maintains that “dominance creates opposition that makes social change inevitable.” In postcolonialism, however, one sees the marginal as the dominant. This means that in the Self/Other; Centre/Periphery binary, the Self and the Centre are jettisoned so that the focus can be on the Other and Periphery which are synonymous with Africa. When the Other is accorded a “Poetic Gaze”, it splits into it-Self and another Other. If the new Other is given a Poetic Gaze, it too will split into itself and another Other. Indeed, there are many Selves and Others among the Other, and there is no fathoming the end to these poetic splits.

In the first split, Africa as the “Other” divides into Leadership and Followership, where Leadership is the Self and Followership is the Other. In keeping with the tenets of New Historicism, the attention of the research is constantly on the Other, in this case Followership, since the Self (Leadership) is dominant enough to warrant more attention. When accorded the Poetic Gaze, the Followership splits into many binary structures such as: rich/poor, educated (informed)/uneducated (uninformed), men/women, adults/children; where women are the Earth (ecology) and children represent the Future (Africa Tomorrow). Followership can, therefore, be seen as the Super Other because it is from it that other “selves” and “others” emerge. All the binary elements are deeply problematised and should be examined closely if Africa must make progress.

So much has been said already about the state of leadership in Africa which does not require belabouring. Thus, attention should be focused on Followership. African followership is an important factor in the transformation of Africa; until the followership decides that it is time for a change, nothing will change on the continent. But then the followership needs to be interrogated to see how it has been manipulated and disempowered by the leadership with the aim of maintaining the status quo. The devices used in weakening the followership must be exposed and dismantled so that the followers can be alive to their duty of enthroning people-conscious leadership in

Africa. To achieve this requires that each of the binary structures drawn from the followership should be critically examined. For instance, Africa should deal with the extreme poverty that is ravaging the continent at the moment. The ever-widening gap between the rich and the poor should be closed because, for one, it creates severe class disparity that precludes collective action and also weakens the people's position of power. Already, the African middle class, as argued by scholars, has become endangered. Perhaps, there are only two classes in Africa today: the upper and the lower classes.

To tackle poverty and the resultant people's power deficiency, it becomes necessary to eradicate illiteracy (lack of information and proper socialisation) in Africa. This is where the educated/uneducated binary is critiqued. The current leadership in Africa is profiting from the current mass illiteracy that has been recorded on the continent. Apart from this, the education system in Africa is in such a lamentable state. Most students graduate with dependent mentality because they were not given an education that stresses mental independence and individuality. This exposes a new class of illiterates in Africa – educated illiterates. A sound education system will enthrone leaders with the needed competence, temperament and integrity, all of which are needed if Africa must attain the aspired status of a developed continent. A postcolonial African education system is one in which Africa educates her own children, not sending them abroad to pick up strange cultural values in exchange for a good education. The truth remains that, in the end, this exotic education really serves no positive purpose since the individual is damaged psychologically and morally before coming back home; that is if the individual ever desires to return.

The men/women binary indicates the relationship between postcolonialism and gender relations. The liberation of the woman is central to the liberation of Africa as far as the postcolonial theory is concerned. We must not repeat the mistake of the past – the mistake of the men marching forward and leaving the women trailing behind. It is a journey that is doomed from the beginning. In the renewed postcolonial era, in African literary criticism, the role of the woman in aiding the liberation of Africa cannot be trifled with. Men and women must move in unison, hand-in-hand. The failure to do this

would leave failure ever dogging our path. Concerted efforts must be made to remove all barriers and strictures which tend to disempower African women.

African Motherhood is symbolised using the Earth. This is where the ecological issues in African literary criticism come in. The relationship between human beings and the environment must not be ignored by any framework in the 21st century. The ecologised situation in Africa is peculiar because it is for a continent whose landscape (physical and social) has been subjected to all manner of abuses in the course of over 400 years. Africa is the mother of the Earth which has to be sustained and nurtured if all must survive. So much depends on the survival of Africa's ecology. Postcolonial ecology urges that Africans should have control over how their environment and the resources in it, human and material, are utilised. The activities of the multinational and transnational oil corporations in the Niger Delta of Nigeria are glaring examples of the gross insensitivity exhibited by the neocolonial forces towards African landscape. It is an "ecological rape" that must be checked.

The adults/children binary structure is the most interesting in the postcolonial discourse of African literature. For one, children have hardly featured in postcolonial discourses, having already been assigned their department in the College of Literature – Children's Literature. Thus, with the growing attention paid to children in newly published works, there seems to be no existing theories to account for the issues affecting them. This is then a clarion call to all writers and critics. Instead of over-flogging issues with repeated critical cadences, they should begin to formalise theories that give attention to the postcolonial African child and how he or she has fared in a postcolonial setting. It should be noted, however, that in a 2008 publication entitled *The Infantist Manifesto*, the study proposed a child-conscious critical theory called Infantism in which the author states that "Infantism is to the child what feminism is to the woman" (Etim, 2008:21). Africa should begin to lay a solid foundation for her children because they are the Future of the continent, just as the women are the Earth.

It is only after all the aforementioned issues have been addressed that Africa can rejoin the global postcolonial discourse, this time not as an inferior Other, but as a benign dominant Self. It is at this point that African writers can begin to utopianise their reality

as Nnolim earnestly desires. Anyone who is wont to doubting the testability of this discourse should recall that the United States was once a colony. India was once a colony. Malaysia also was once a colony. All it takes for the countries in Africa to redeem themselves is to overhaul their leaderships and institutions through the instrumentality of Followership.

When a leadership-conscious postcolonialist critic picks up a work of art, he or she will look to avoid the “Blame Elements” that have instituted themselves behind semantic signposts in the text. These blame elements point to an old Centre that is no more. They constitute devices that subvert the real meaning of the text. By ignoring these illusionary elements, for that is what they are, the critic will be able to focus on the Other. When the critic gives the Other a Poetic Gaze, the Other will split into “it-Self” and a new Other. The new Self is Leadership (it is always leadership in all its forms – from the family to the national capital), while the new Other is Followership. It is the Followership, a Super Other, that will be interrogated in any discourse, against the dominance of the Leadership.

Writers and critics must realise and must be aware of the various techniques in which the Followership verbalise their views against the Leadership like sighs, groans, murmuring and even silence. The critic should aim to expose how the Followership has learnt to survive the dominance of the Leadership, as well as, the many devices which the Leadership has used to keep the Followership permanently in check. The postcolonialist critic should also check the relationship among the binary elements in the Super Other, which are (but not limited to) rich/poor, educated (informed)/uneducated (uninformed), men/women (the Earth) and adults-children (The Future). However, it is doubtful if the critic can exhaust all these structures in a given discourse.

For the purpose of this research, however, the study proposes to interrogate leadership in relation to rich/poor, men/women and adults-children dialectics in the selected primary data sources in each of the chapters that involve analysis of the texts. Attempts will be made to make cross-references to relevant texts in the course of the analysis. The study will embark on the review of relevant literature in the net chapter.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

“The whole science of human nature must be explored
to lay a foundation for the science of politics.”

- **James Mills**

Preamble

The chapter undertakes the review of literature relevant to the research. The review is divided into three parts. In the first part, the research reviews related literature on the history and politics of Malawi, especially the events that span 1964 when Malawi gained independence up until contemporary times. The review attempts to put these historico-political events in critical perspectives, with an argument that indicts the leadership integrity of the country, which in turn would create a discourse that specifically interrogates leadership in literature. The second part of the review is devoted to the critique of relevant literature on historicity, postmodernism and post-postmodernism. This part of the review serves to highlight which aspects of historicity apply to the research and shows the nature of the relationship among historicity, postmodernism and post-postmodernism. As it has already been stated, the application of postmodernism to the research is peripheral. It is limited mostly to its temporality and aesthetic features, which will be analysed for the appreciation of the literary texture of the texts and to complement the sociopolitical issues raised in the primary data sources.

Developments in Malawian literature and criticism constitute the third and the final section of the review, which is aimed at taking stock of the existing works and issues in Malawian literature as a way of exposing the lacuna that the current research would fill. In reviewing related literature on Malawian literature, the researcher wishes to acknowledge the dearth of materials and the difficulty of access to the ones available. This has, to a large extent, affected the structuring or, perhaps, the re-structuring of the review section.

Malawian History and Politics in the Perspectives of the Reordered Postcolonial Binary Structures (1964 – Present)

It is a given that the postcolonial theory does not shy away from history and politics. In fact, both serve as major raw materials for its discourse. Thus, in an attempt to interpret the seven texts selected for the study, it becomes necessary to critically render an account of Malawian history and politics, especially from the chronological timeframe of post-independence era up to contemporary times. In doing this, efforts will be made to isolate and critically discuss the sociopolitical issues linked to leadership. This is in keeping with the hypothesis of this research – that leadership is at the centre of Africa’s developmental crisis. At the end of the review, it should be seen how it has become imperative for leadership to be scrutinised in African literature, generally, and in Malawian literature, specifically.

The evolution of the Malawian society goes as far back as the early centuries of the Common Era as reported by Bauer and Taylor (2005), who link the historical beginnings and destinies of Southern African states to the Khoisan, widely accepted as the first inhabitants of the present Southern Africa. The Khoisan were joined and later displaced by the Bantu-speaking tribes which migrated from the North to settle in the Southern region. The descendants of these Bantu tribes, according to Bauer and Taylor (2005), include the Chewa people in contemporary Malawi. Nkhata (2010) maintains the widely held view that the *Akafula* or the Batwa were the first people to occupy the area now known as contemporary Malawi. It is likely that the *Akafula* were a tribe of the Khoisan because they were absorbed and displaced by the Bantu groups at about the same time the Khoisan were affected by the Bantu migration. The name Malawi is thought to be derived from the name Maravi “flames”, the Bantu tribe that settled in Malawi after hunting down the *Akafula*. The Maravi Kingdom or empire was founded by the Amaravi people in the late 15th century, according to Wikipedia (2018) and would eventually become the Chewa of contemporary Malawi. The eventual decline of the Maravi empire, orchestrated by in-fighting among the unit leaders as well as the slave trade, gave room for invasion of the Kingdom by other tribes such as Angoni (Nguni), Ayao (Yao) and Lombe (Lomwe) in the 18th century. These supremacy wars would continue until the arrival of the British colonialists in the 19th century. Indeed, it

has been widely observed that colonialism played a significant role in saving some of the tribes from extinction. Nobel (2016) gives insights into the origins of the existence of both matrilineal and patrilineal societies in contemporary Malawi by stating that in the 1800s Southern and Central Malawi were occupied by mostly matrilineal groups such as the Chewa, Nyanja and Mang'anja. On the other hand, patrilineal groups like the Ngoni and Yao settled in the North by 1860 (24).

Malawi, also known as the land of lakes, encountered colonialism first with the arrival of the Portuguese in the seventeenth century who were mostly interested in the slave trade. These were followed by the Germans and finally the British who had to contend not only with the Portuguese and the Germans for the soul of the land, but also with the Arabs who had been trading with the peoples long before the arrival of the Portuguese. Malawi was declared a British Protectorate in 1891 following the introduction of David Livingstone's "Three Cs": Civilisation, Commerce and Christianity. In the colonial period, Malawi was known first as British Central Africa and later as Nyasaland, apparently named after one of its bodies of water or lakes. The name was changed from British Central Africa in 1907 following the adoption of the Nyasaland Order-in-Council which had been in operation from 1889 when Malawi was proclaimed a British Protectorate.

In 1953 Malawi was involved, as reported by Nkhata (2010), in an abortive Federation involving Southern and Northern Rhodesia known as the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland or the Central African Federation (CAF). The Federation would last for only ten years before disintegrating owing to nationalist agitations, especially by those nationalists like Kenneth Kaunda of the Zambian African National Congress and Hastings Banda of the Nyasaland African Congress, who felt that the Federation was unbalanced and unfavourable to their units not only politically, but also economically. Hazlewood and Henderson (1960:85), after a study of the economics of the Federation, conclude that ". . . the pace of economic growth in Nyasaland has, in fact, been somewhat slower since the federation than in the period before 1953." Politically, the Federation was characterised or dominated by white minority rule – a situation that instigated protests by the nationalist leaders such as Henry Chipembere, Kanyama Chiume and Dunduzu Chisiza. It is recorded by Kalinga (1996) that these nationalists

were the ones who encouraged Dr Hastings Banda to return to Malawi in 1958 to join the liberation struggle. Banda and the other nationalist agitators were imprisoned following violent protests in Nyasaland and the declaration of state of emergency in 1959. The Federation ended in 1963 and Malawi gained flag independence the following year.

Perhaps, “the rain began to beat” Malawian leadership and people shortly before independence when the then youthful Nyasaland African Congress (NAC) leadership invited Dr Hastings Kamuzu Banda, who was at the time practising Medicine in Ghana, to return home and lead the party to independence. With Malawi being an age-revering milieu, the NAC leadership realised that it needed someone who was older and with a wider cultural and educational experience to lead the Malawian liberation movement. This happened at the time when the young Malawian nationalists realised how important it was to mobilise all sections of the society in order to muster an impressive force to pressurise the colonial masters to relinquish power to the people.

Banda must have had all the qualities of a leader needed at the time –wide education and exposure, maturity, age, experience and a firm ideological standing – all which were highly valuable and indispensable for the liberation struggle. However, the signs were there that Banda would turn out to be autocratic in the long run. For instance, Jones and Manda (2006:203) report that “prior to his return, Banda stated that he would take up the banner of the indigenous nationalist Movement, quoting Williams (1978:174), ‘only if he was guaranteed the presidency of the Congress party, the right to hand-pick the executive and extensive powers to run the nationalist movement in whatever way he thought right’”. The seed of dictatorship was sown once the NAC leadership gave in to Banda’s vainglorious demands. Because power usually unmask the individual and exposes his or her true self, the mistake the youthful NAC leadership made was in not carefully studying Banda’s background before entrusting him with such a sensitive position.

The tendency to take leadership or a leader at face value or on mere appearances is shown to be very fatalistic in the case of Dr Banda. A moment’s mistake cost Malawi thirty long years of untold suffering occasioned by a despotic leadership that thrived on

darkness and death. This is why leadership has got to be fore-grounded in contemporary Africa's postcolonial discourse – which is the aspiration of this research.

In Banda's Malawi, one sees semblances of the colonial rule in contemporary political culture. This analogy is strikingly drawn, albeit innocuously, by Page (1980:56) in observations in relation to the involvement of Malawians in World War One in an effort to emphasise how Malawians see their colonial past in terms of victimisation. Perhaps, this explains why Langworthy (1970:33) maintains that, "history serves the purpose of explaining the past in terms of the present." Malawian history and politics is one dominated by victimisation, whether it is in colonial or post-independence times. It was not only the peoples of Malawi that were victimised; Malawian history was also affected by that victimisation. Chirambo (2001:205) writes that apart from adopting the title: His Excellency, the Life President, Ngwazi Dr H. Kamuzu Banda, ". . . Banda also carefully appropriated and manipulated oral traditions and history to consolidate and legitimize his power." The exploitation of history for personal gains by successive African leadership is indicative of not only the fragility of history itself, but also symptomatic of the relativity of truth in postcolonial discourses. This, therefore, makes it imperative for history to be constantly scrutinised so as to thwart any attempt at distortion by the hegemonic forces in society.

One of the traditional institutional structures which Banda appropriated to his personal advantage was the *Mbumba* institution, where the women within a particular family look up to a male figure for protection. This male figure, *Nkhoswe*, was expected to look after the women under his care by protecting and providing for them. Mkamanga (2000:36-37) writes that "Banda declared publicly that he was *nkhoswe* number one, i.e. custodian for all the women in Malawi. The women were his *mbumba*." This meant that he was responsible for the safety and wellbeing of all Malawian women. This was very ingenious of Banda as the *Mbumba-Nkhoswe* theory struck the right cord among Malawian women, especially those in the rural areas. However, instead of bettering the lives of the women, the politicisation of the *Mbumba-Nkhoswe* tradition became a social tool for the exploitation and marginalisation of Malawian women.

Yet, the irony in all this is that Banda himself never married. Instead he took on Mrs Cecilia Kadzamira, a trained nurse who worked with him in Limbe, Nyasaland, as the official Hostess of his administration. Fondly referred to as “Mama” or “Mother of the Nation” by friends and teeming admirers, Mrs Kadzamira, together with her uncle, John Tembo, reportedly grew to be very powerful in the Banda regime. The duo were said to be in control of Malawian affairs most of the time, especially, when Banda could not function well due to old age or illness. In a letter, now made public, which Banda wrote to Ernest C. Mataka, the late dictator explains that he could not marry a Malawian woman because no Malawian woman could measure up to his social and educational standards (Khamula, 2016).

One of the ways through which female exploitation manifested in the Banda dispensation was in the area of dancing. Gilman (2004:35) avers that, “women draped in fabric that depicted the president’s face were required to participate by dancing and singing songs extolling the president and his party while vilifying his opponents.” In this research, the idea of dancing is deployed metaphorically to connote all the oppressive signposts that point to the unfortunate posturing of women in Malawi. Women have always been used without being adequately rewarded or compensated by successive regimes in the country. What this study emphasises is the fact that until African leadership realises the need to take necessary steps in solving the problems of women’s continuous subjugation and marginalisation, development will continue to elude Africa.

A series of incidents in 1964 that later got to be known as the Cabinet crisis awakened Banda’s sense of insecurity. This led to many rash actions that put him irreversibly on the path to dictatorship. The crisis is explained in terms of the ideological and later physical clashes Banda had with members of his Cabinet, most of whom were the young leaders who had invited him over to lead the nation to independence. Apparently, these young ministers were not comfortable with the autocratic tendencies exhibited by the president shortly after independence. For instance, the ministers complained of not being consulted on issues or before important decisions were made. They were also against Banda’s decision to maintain diplomatic relationship with

apartheid South Africa. To voice their disapproval, some of the ministers resigned while others were dismissed.

Indeed, the revolt of the ministers constituted a milestone in Malawian history and politics. It was a struggle between autocracy and democracy, darkness and light, evil and good. In the end, the former triumphed over the latter, albeit temporarily, that is, for thirty years. Finding his position threatened by the Cabinet crisis, Banda moved quickly to consolidate power. He hounded some of the democratic voices into exile; jailed some and killed some, especially those who attempted to lead rebellions. Yatuta Chisiza, the Minister of Home Affairs, for example, was killed after an attempt to unseat Banda through a band of rebellion organised from Mozambique. Orton Chirwa, the Attorney General and Minister for Justice, rotted in jail for many years and later died, while Henry Chipembere went into exile in the United States shortly after the failure of the rebellion he led.

In 1970, Banda declared Malawi a one-party state and adopted the title of life president. With these, the foundation for Banda's dictatorship was laid. What followed were the usual deadly dictatorial strategies to maintain a tight grip on power. Chirambo (2009:78) reports that Banda's dictatorship, "used coercive methods to maintain control over the population that included detention without trial, forced membership of the only party allowed in Malawi, the Malawi Congress Party (MCP), and draconian censorship laws that curtailed freedom of speech and the press". In this, Mapanje's *And Crocodiles Are Hungry at Night* will be analysed to show the extent of the deadly darkness that characterised Banda's dictatorship. This is necessary because Malawian literature is preoccupied with the Banda dictatorship due to the enduring influence Banda's long reign had on the Malawian society. In fact, to understand contemporary Malawian history and politics, one has to be well acquainted with the Banda era.

Banda's dictatorship was sustained by its inertia of atrocities characterised by killing, maiming and silencing of dissenting voices until the early 1990s when criticisms, internal and external, forced the government to concede to a referendum on whether Malawi should change to a multiparty system. A key source of pressure was found in the famous pastoral letters which were read in parishes across Malawi in 1992. These

letters prompted widespread protests across the country, which culminated in a referendum that was decided in favour of multiparty system. With the result of the referendum, it was obvious that the Banda regime had met its Waterloo and that his deadly grip on Malawian leadership had been broken. And so it was at the 1994 elections, Banda and his party, the MCP, met their doom. The peoples of Malawi unanimously elected Bakili Muluzi of the United Democratic Front (UDF) to govern the long-oppressed country.

Hope returned to Malawi once the result of the referendum was announced. The Malawi Congress Party (MCP) government itself began to take steps to redeem its damaged image in the eye of the public by, for instance, lifting a ban on free press for the first time in many years. Chirambo (1996:26) writes that, “after the twenty-eight years of muzzling, harassment, intimidation, detention, and even murder of journalists [and writers] in the country, John Tembo, Minister of State at the time, announced at a press conference that the President had declared that there should be free press.” With the restoration of freedom of speech and the advent of a democratic regime, Malawians were optimistic about their future which, from all standpoints, looked promising.

However, with the passage of time, these hopes and expectations were soon shown or seen to be pre-mature. Many critics have written on the post-Banda disillusionment in Malawian history and politics. It is true that the post-Banda era is better in many ways compared to the previous regime – many reforms have been effected, people enjoy relative freedom of speech, women are no longer forced to dance, the Malawian Youth Pioneers and the Youth Leagues have been disbanded, there is rule of law and people are no longer arbitrarily thrown into detention, among other benefits of a multiparty system and democracy. Yet, wherever one looks, one is still confronted with the signs of the Banda era, which lurk in certain quarters of Malawian history and politics.

Khembo’s (2004:80) paper succinctly captures the post-Banda disillusionment when it states in its abstract that “the Malawian case has demonstrated that when neo-liberalism flounders, despotism recurs in a cycle of regime change.” The paper goes on to detail the abuse of power evident in the UDF government led by Bakili Muluzi which includes the monopolisation of the public media; undermining of the Anti-corruption

Bureau, the Law Commission, the Human Rights Commission, the Office of the Ombudsman and the National Compensation Tribunal (Khembo, 2004:83). It is obvious that the incidences of power abuses which were reported during the era of Kamuzu Banda are still prevalent in the post-Banda era, albeit through novel techniques and structures. The issues of poverty and corruption are topical in the post-Banda Malawi as they were before 1994. The economic dependent status of Malawi also endures even as Lwanda (2006:527) notes “the historical continuity between the economically impoverished colonial Nyasaland and donor-dependent postcolonial Malawi” and goes on to observe that “colonial grants have been replaced by postcolonial loans and grants, creating a debt-burdened and donor-dependent state.”

The terms “Katangale” and “ziphuphu” are used by Lwanda and interpreted as “high level corruption” and “corruption”, respectively, which define social and political relationships in Malawi. In a state where, from all indications, the political ideology is money, there hardly will be any meaningful development, as the politicians are aware that all they need to do is throw a few Kwacha notes around during elections while the country continues to stagnate in abject poverty the rest of the years. This way, it would appear that until both the leadership and the followership are united in their rejection of patrimonial view of the state, Malawi will continue in her dependent posture for a very long time.

A very important issue in the discourse on Malawian history and politics is the treatment of women, which has been partly dealt with earlier on in the review. It is a sad fact that female oppression has continued in various guises in the post-Banda era. Kamlongera (2008:471) notes that, “the majority of those who hold public office in Malawi are men,” and that “. . . women are relegated to the private sphere of the home and to participation in non-political public events.” The strategic exclusion of women in Malawian politics has deepened the culture of dependence on men for survival and has encouraged their continual oppression. One of the ways in which Malawian women have been victimised in the post-Banda era is through political dancing. Gilman (2001:44) states that “some in Malawi – politicians, human rights activists, members of the general population – argue that the mostly poor uneducated women who dance are being manipulated to perform through the potential remunerations; and are thus being

taken advantage of and exploited by political leaders, contributing to the perpetration of subordination of women in formal politics as well as in the society more generally.” Both Gilman (2009) and Mkamanga (2000) trace the history of women’s dancing from the era of Banda through to the post-Banda times; and both agree that the condition has not changed considerably. Gilman (2009:8), for instance, while observing women’s dancing at UDF rally, observes that “Both the rallies and women’s dancing in the current dispensation follow the formulaic structures so well established during Banda’s regime.”

The tendency for African leaders to hold on to power endlessly is not only exemplified in Banda’s thirty-year autocratic rule but can also be found in the attempt by Muluzi to change the constitution to allow himself continue in office for a third term. When this did not succeed, Muluzi is reported to have handpicked Bingu Mutharika to succeed him. Tendencies such as this have led many to believe that Africa practises autocratic democracy. Mutharika died in office in 2012 and was succeeded by the Vice President Joyce Banda, who could not retain the position during the 2014 presidential election that was won by Peter Mutharika, brother to the late Bingu. In an interview she granted to Annalisa Merelli in 2016, Joyce Banda alleged that the progress in women leadership was under threat. This was an apparent allusion to her inability to retain her presidency which she attributed to the insecurity of patriarchy on female leadership. In her words, “it is as if patriarchal societies took a nap and woke up with us sitting on the table. And so they are pushing back” (Par5).

Thus, it is seen that gender oppression persists and as a consequence precludes the empowerment of women since women’s access to sources of power and empowerment is impeded by such oppression. It is in the light of this that one sees the problematics in Mkamanga’s (2000) suggestion that women who have access to positions of power should empower other women. This research is of the belief that it would take a collective *conscientisation* of society for the women to be liberated, which is why the interrogation of leadership (which is mostly a male preserve) has become imperative.

Malawian politics continue to be marred by controversies owing to the parochial interests of successive leaderships. In 2014, for instance, the Malawian president, Peter

Mutharika, was accused of favouritism and nepotism. Thom Chiumia of *Nyasa Times* reports that: “Mutharika has come under heavy criticism in the way he has selected his Cabinet and made some public appointments. Critics accuse him of practising nepotism by giving top positions in government to people from his Southern region, loyalists and his tribesmen” (Chiumia, 2014: Par2). Kaspin (1997:464), having noted the politicisation of tribe in Africa, states explicitly that “. . . tribalism seems to pose the single greatest threat to national stability.” Political corruption is equally rife in Malawi as is evident in the several instances of corruption reported in the media, including the recent MaizeGate, which led to the sack of the Minister of Agriculture, Irrigation and Water Development, George Chaponda (Chiumia, 2017: Par1).

In all this, Malawi remains a country riddled by extreme poverty and under siege by the HIV-AIDS pandemic. In spite of these, many Malawian leaders mostly care in their words and empty promises, not by action and visible commitment to ameliorating the socioeconomic plights of the masses. BuildOn Global reports that Malawi is “consistently ranked among the world’s 20 least developed countries on the UN’s Human Development Index” and goes on to state that “over 50% of the country’s population lives below poverty line of USD 1.25 a day” (Par1). However, the BBC in a recent report claims that “Malawi. . . is making efforts to overcome decades of underdevelopment, corruption and the impact of an HIV-AIDS problem, which claims the lives of tens of thousands every year” (Par1), without stating what these efforts are and how these problems are being solved.

The fact remains that as long as the Malawian political leadership continues to be plagued by ineptitude, insincerity and corruption, Malawian society will remain a site of contesting ills. According to Englund (2002:12), what obtains currently in Malawian political history is that “the country’s post-authoritarian political history has witnessed perplexing moments when the foes of yesterday have suddenly emerged as friends. . . .” It is a case of politics without ideologies and set down principles. Such politics could deny a people its collective destiny. For instance, Muluzi is known to have been a major player in the government of Kamuzu Banda. As president in the post-Banda era, how far can he go in righting the wrongs of the past? It seems that the first step in the repositioning of Malawian leadership would be its sincere reconciliation with its

political history and all the players involved in that history – by way of coming clean with the past.

Biographical information on Dr Hastings Banda and Mrs Cecilia Kadzamira

Dr Hastings Kamuzu Banda

The accounts of Banda's life and those of Mrs Kadzamira are gleaned from several sources, including Shorts (1974), Brody (2017), Wikipedia (2018) and Tentham (2000). Banda's birthdate is uncertain. Some sources put it between March and April of 1898 while others place it at February 1899. He was born in British Central Africa as Akim Kamanthwala Mtunthama Banda close to Kasunga in present Malawi. He was the first son of Mphonongo and his wife Akupingamnyama Phiri, who were from Chewa clans of Banda and Phiri. The name "Kamanthwala" which means "little medicine" was later changed to "Kamuzu" which means "little roots", based on the idea of women being cured of infertility or having the birth of a child hastened by taking medicinal roots recommended by native doctors. In the case of Banda, the doctor's name was Chagulana Mwanjiwa. Banda's maternal grandmother was instructed on how to administer the roots to achieve the best results. The name "John Hastings" was adopted by Banda from a Scottish missionary whom Banda admired.

Banda's love for education began right from childhood when he exhibited traits of inquisitiveness; always asking questions to find answers to the mysteries around him. His love for farming or agriculture and the foundational inspiration to study Medicine were influenced by his grandfather, Chayamba. Banda obtained his basic education at one of the Church of Scotland Missionary schools in Mtunthama, in the village of Chinyama, at about 1905. He was baptised in 1910 in the Church of Scotland. It should be recalled that converting to Christianity was the price most Africans had to pay in order to be educated. In addition, colonial education mostly consisted in mastering the tenets of the Bible. However, Banda wanted more than Bible education, so much so that in about 1914 or 1915, Banda left home on foot to South Africa with the dream of attending the famous Church of Scotland's Lovedale Missionary Institution, reputed to be the first institution for the advanced education of the Native peoples of Southern Africa. Upon arrival in South Africa, the young Banda realised that he needed to work

if he must, first, survive and then pay for his education. Perhaps, in return for treating his blistered legs, a consequence of months of trekking, Banda accepted to work as menial servant for Dr Merrit Holly in his hospital at Hartley, now Chegutu. His experience in Dr Holly's clinic was to solidify his ambition to be a medical doctor. Before moving to Johannesburg where he worked at the Witwatersrand Deep Mine near Boksburg in the vicinity of the Reef gold mines, Banda worked briefly at Maronjeni Colliery in Dundee, Natal.

In about 1917, Banda resigned his membership of the Dutch Reform Church and joined the new African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E) Church at Boksburg in protest over Reverend T. Cullen Young's decision to hand over the only Chichewa speaking station of the Livingstonia Mission to the Dutch Reform Church. It was at this time that Banda met Bishop Vernon of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, who agreed to pay for his education at Wilberforce Academy in Xenia, Ohio. Thus, on 6th July 1925, Banda left South Africa for the United States to pursue his dream of a world-class education. Upon the completion of his High School education at Wilberforce, Banda enrolled in Indiana University at Bloomington in 1928; but finding the institution boring and unchallenging, Banda, at the risk of angering his sponsors, applied for and was accepted at the famous University of Chicago. In 1931 at the age of 33, Banda graduated with honours from the University of Chicago to attest to his years of studying languages, history, philosophy and political science. To achieve his dream of being a medical doctor, Banda went to study Medicine at Meharry College, Nashville, Tennessee. He graduated in 1937 at the age of 39 with 90% average score. It is reported that Banda excelled in all areas of Medicine but was particularly revered for his surgical skills and abilities.

Due to the fact that the British authorities in Nyasaland did not recognise the medical degree from Nashville Meharry College of Medicine, Kamuzu had to apply to the University of Edinburgh to earn a medical degree that would enable him to return to Nyasaland to practise Medicine. While studying there, he was ordained an Elder at Guthrie Memorial Church, Edinburgh. In 1941, Banda obtained the degrees qualifying him to practise Medicine in any territory of the British Empire. His application to serve as a medical missionary was rejected, though he was finally accepted by the Nyasaland

Government as a Junior Medical Officer. Banda rejected this offer because it was racist and unfair. He then moved to Liverpool to begin formal practice while at the same time studying Tropical Medicine at Liverpool University, which he completed in 1942. All this time, Banda had been in touch with home, communicating with the leaders of the liberation movement and even sponsoring the NAC activities with his earnings. Instead of returning to Nyasaland, Banda moved to Ghana in 1953, the same year the dreaded Central African Federation (CAF) was formed. It is debatable why Banda made this move instead of returning directly to Nyasaland to confront the political situation at home. Some sources say he needed to sort out some personal affairs arising from a scandal with Merene French, a daughter-in-law to one of his patients whose house Banda was staying (Mutanga, 2011; Short, 1974). Other sources say he could not bear to continue practising Medicine in a country that had betrayed his people by lumping them in “stupid Federation” (Brody, 2017). Banda would stay and practise Medicine in Ghana until 1958, after 42 years abroad, when he finally returned to Nyasaland to lead the Congress in a final push to abolish the Federation and to achieve independence.

Dr Banda died in a South African hospital on 25th November, 1997, after three decades of serving as the Life President of Malawi. He did not marry and did not leave a known heir, though one Jumani Johansson had come forward in 2010 to claim that he was the son of the late dictator.

Mrs Cecilia Kadzamira

Cecilia Tamanda Kadzamira was born on 25th of June, 1937 in Southern Rhodesia to John Kadzamira in an area that is now the Capital of Zimbabwe. She qualified as a nurse at Salisbury Central Hospital and worked at Old Highfields Clinic before going to work with Dr Banda in his clinic at Limbe. When Banda became President, Mrs Kadzamira worked with him as his private secretary. It is widely reported that Mrs Kadzamira was a confidante of Banda and was a very powerful figure in his regime. She was appointed the Official Government Hostess and was regarded as the First Lady of Malawi, even though she was not married to the President. She was also accorded the titles of Mama and Mother of the Nation. Between 1984 and 1985, a women-conscious organisation known as Chitukuko Cha Amai Mu (CCAM) was formed by the Banda administration to ensure the development of Malawian women and Mrs Kadzamira was made its leader. Through this organisation, Mrs Kadzamira wielded

enormous power in Malawi. It is also reported that she and her uncle, John Tembo, were the most powerful political figures in Malawi during the Banda days. Tentham (2000) reports that Banda left most of his wealth to Mrs Kadzamira when he died, an act that was contested by Banda's family in the courts with the argument that Mrs Kadzamira persuaded Banda to will his wealth to her at a time when the late dictator did not have control over his rationality due to senility and illness. His wealth was once rumoured to be worth over 445 million dollars with estates and bank accounts in Malawi and Britain, respectively.

Historicity, Postmodernism and Post-postmodernism

Historicity is a term deployed in philosophy, literature and the arts to infer the fidelity of a work of art to the facts of history. It is the interpretive barometer by which the critic determines the extent to which a text has stayed faithful to the extra-literary history. It should be noted that despite the recent encroachment of what this researcher terms elsewhere as "postcolonial formalism", in which attempts are being made to checkmate the dominance of history and politics in postcolonial criticism by placing more emphasis on aesthetics (J. Su, 2011; J. McLeod, 2001; and D. Granger, 2003), Lewis (2014:15) maintains that ". . . histories of the political content of these former colonies and their former European colonising power are very relevant to any study in this field". Historicity is then the study of how history operates in a literary text, as well as the critique of that history. The nature and texture of fiction in a neo-modernist postcolonial era must have necessitated the conceptualisation of historicity so as to formalise a science of retrieving history in a fictionalised narrative. Historicity then is a science of history, a method through which the extra-literary could be extracted from the literary. It is based on the age-long but later formalist-despised assumption that literature is ever conscious of its zeitgeist. However, literature is always rendered with the overriding belief that its world is removed from reality, from history and that the inhabitants of this dreamy and far-away world are mere fictional parsonages. Against this dominant belief, historicity is that which is relied upon when accounting for the historical actuality of events, persons and setting in the art works.

In a postcolonial discourse, historicity is more or less an indispensable tool, especially when understood within the context of the colonialists and neocolonialists' penchant

for distortion and manipulation of the colonised's history to their advantage. Ocaý (2008:47) warns that, “. . . Historicity . . . should not be reduced to mere history as a science”, adding that “as that which defines history, which is commonly understood as the telling of a particular story or a narration of events that happened in a specific time and place . . . historicity is the underlying principle of an event.”

Historicity becomes interesting, especially in a literary and critical dispensation where even theories are being advanced to validate non-fictional narratives such as biography, autobiography and memoirs as bona fide works of fiction. Oriaku (1990: Preface, V), for instance, submits that, “studies in autobiography have proved . . . that the fiction/non-fiction dichotomy is of little help in differentiating autobiography from the other genres because there is some element of both in every genre.” Thus, this research derives motivational and critical impetus from Oriaku's position in its intention or attempt to study the historicity of Mapanje's *And Crocodiles Are Hungry at Night* and Gibson's *Mother of Malawi*, which are a memoir and an autobiography, respectively, among other works of fiction.

The deployment of historicity, whether consciously or unconsciously, in the critique of postcolonial literature is equally necessitated by the earlier reported tendencies by most African leaders to appropriate the history of their societies into entrenching their despotic regimes. Since historicity factualises textual events or determines such factuality, hardly would any attempt to distort history stand or go unnoticed by the observant critic armed with historicity. Marcuse (1987) shows that contrary to the claims by a number of critics, Hegel's philosophy is faithful to the tenets of historicity. Stressing the importance of studying the past, Marcuse (1987:xxiii) maintains that “because beings are understood as structures of unifying unity in movement, their past is a decisive aspect of their present.” However, Marcuse (1987:xxiv) is interested in history “not . . . as it is lived through but history as it is remembered.” This research aligns itself with this model that sees historicity in terms of re-memory because it makes for a creative recreation of history, which is mostly the exclusive of works of arts. This also corroborates Lynn (1994) which sees remembered history as the human story textualised.

Hegel's three-pronged theorisation which hinges on the thesis, antithesis and synthesis paved way for the subjectivity of narratives and the evolution of point of views in resolving any ideological crisis. However, sadly enough, Hegel excluded Africa from history. Of course, this explains the postcolonial theory's initial and continuous preoccupation with history. All that Said needed to say was that the "Other's" history was important too. Thus, although Hegel doubted the existence of Africa's historicity, Israel (2008:1) posits that this denial "had been long ago laid on [the] deconstructive slab" on which his paper and this thesis rest.

Since Said, the postcolonial discourse has been moderated by history and inevitably so. This obsession is observed by the Centre for Humanities Research (2008:3) when it states that, "the study of humanities in Africa is seemingly underwritten by a deep-seated historicism" and goes on to define historicism as ". . . the orders of time and interpretive codes that structures [sic] disciplinary reason in the humanities and that binds it inextricably to the emancipation narratives positioned against colonialism, late capitalism and their attendant technologies of domination and subjugation." Historicism can, therefore, be contrasted from historicity in that while the former is a history-retrieving tool and technique; the latter is concerned with the mode of presentation and perception of history, though both have history as their subject matter.

Historicity enlivens the postcolonial discourse, giving it lifeblood, vitality and sustained relevance. Without such deep historical consciousness, according to Israel (2000:1), scholars involved in the de-colonisation project would not be able to "trace the contours of colonialism's episteme, discuss the complicities of the disciplines therein, deconstruct and unsettle their intellectual achievements, and gauge the effects of naturalisation and internalisation of colonialism's discourses, archives and *dispositifs* on Africa itself."

In postcolonialism, history occupies a central position. It is through history that postcolonialism exposes leadership failures in Africa and uses that as the parameter to measure the developmental strides, or otherwise, made on the continent. The postcolonial consideration of history hinges on the decades of negative progress recorded on the continent which is mostly occasioned by poor, incompetent and

diabolical leadership. Postcolonial historicity is concerned with the art of retrieving the poeticised historical actualities in African fiction on leadership, as well as the repressive consequences of such leadership on the “Otherised” oppressed structures as theorised in the postcolonial framework. The ideological motivation for such historical salvaging lies in the treatise of Segal (2015:5,6) on the historical value of the art object because, for her, “any cultural object can be understood as an artefact” and that “all human artefacts and practices have extension in time, whether or not they have extension in space.”

Segal sees historicity as the present and a relevant past all at once. This implies that history takes place even in contemporary actions while past events have present significance when called forth. History is, therefore, never obsolete, but constantly renews itself in relation to changing realities. This work also relies on Neterdova’s (2014:7) definition of historicity as “historical background and historical information used in novels in order to give a fictional story a stamp of reality.” In the New Historicist creed, literary texts embody the the social events of their milieu. Histroicity serves as a tool for retrieving these events. This explains the relevance of Neterdova’s definition of historicity to this study, as the research is interested in critiquing the leadership historicity in the selected Malawian prose narratives.

Steinmetz’s (2011) article deconstructs the prevailing view that Bourdieu is ahistorical in his writings. Steinmetz (2011:46) states that, “more than any French sociologist, Bourdieu allowed French sociology to historicize itself – to achieve a merger of history and sociology that had been discussed by Durkheim and the founders of the *Annales* School but never fully accepted by sociologists.” This quote is necessary in order to indicate the historical conditioning of sociological researches of which the postcolonial studies is a part. At a time when the relevance of a number of disciplines in the Humanities, including history, are being questioned, Steinmetz’s work is a pointer to the extent of history’s permeability into several fields of discourse. This research is also an attempt to show the enduring nature of history and its immortal relevance, especially in aiding critics and philosophers to make sense of the times.

Historicity is beset with a number of problems, including the subjectivity of its science and methodology, as well as, the age-long challenge posed by periodisation which forms part of the subject matter in Harré and Moghaddam's (2006) article. For instance, it is difficult to reconcile the prevalence of non-linear and non-teleological views of history in the New Historicist creed with the conception of history as a narrative which should gravitate towards a given purposeful end. According to Harré and Moghaddam (2006:100), periodisation: "the tendency to categorize and apply stereotypes to people in [a] different historical periods . . . has been associated with a tendency to exaggerate differences between . . . loosely defined epochs." The major issue in periodisation is the difficulty of determining how and when change has taken place. One way of approaching this problem, according to Harré and Moghaddam, is in the proper deployment of high and low magnification in the interpretation of historical periods so as to understand what has changed and what has remained the same over time. It must be pointed out that this issue is obvious in the Malawian political history, especially, when it is not easily discernible at some point what the difference is between the Banda and the post-Banda eras.

At this point in the review, it is necessary that the idea of historicity should be linked to not only the postcolonial, but also to the postmodern and the post-postmodern. In the first place, it must be noted that contemporary critical discourses are mediated and moderated by history. However, each interpretive procedure – say postcolonialism or postmodernism – has its own peculiar perception of history though not without certain points of overlap. The postcolonial theorisation deploys the post-structuralist deconstructive formula to make way for a discourse that privileges the history of the Other. Thus, the historicity of most postcolonial texts recognises the hegemonic relationship between the history of the Self and that of the Other and strives to interrogate that history, with a view to correcting the perceptual and ideological imbalances entrenched by the earlier colonial authorities. In the context of the re-arranged postcolonial binaries, as theorised in this thesis, the former "Other" has assumed "Selfhood" and many "Others" have emerged from such a poetic transformation. The historicity that interests this novel framework is one that is central to African leadership and how the conditioning of such leadership has affected the "Other" structures in the texts.

Since this research claims to draw its data from postmodern texts, it is necessary to philosophise on the existing literature on postmodernism and post-postmodernism. The idea behind this is to determine how historicity is perceived by these frameworks, as well as, understanding what constitutes the post-postmodern in the African context. However, it should be pointed out that whatever information is gleaned from the review in this regard would be peripheral in application since the major preoccupation of the research is the analysis of the selected primary data sources within the purview of the reordered binaries of postcolonialism.

Sheehan's (2012) paper postulates on the dismantling of grand narratives in the postmodernist ideological epoch through what she refers to as "critical questioning of previously held notions" (Par7). It is through such questioning that Sheehan realised how history could be narrated from the experiences of the "Other". For instance, the history of class struggle was shaped by the experiences of the oppressed masses, the history of patriarchy was conditioned by the subjugation and marginalisation of the woman and the history of colonisation was informed by the experiences of the colonised (Par10). The approach to history from the viewpoint of the oppressed is what Sheehan sees as history from below. Sheehan's postulation aligns with the postcolonialist structuring and posturing in terms of ideological tenets and historical perception of oppression and repression. For one, where Sheehan warns of the dangers of small narratives transforming into grand narratives, the postcolonial framework as redrawn notes how the former "Other" has transformed itself into a "Subject". Yet the new subject births a chain of "Otherised" oppressed structures that must be interrogated. This way, one can see how the postmodern aligns with the postcolonial.

Perhaps, this explains the assertion put forward by Sauri (2011:47) that, "postmodernism is. . . not only the name given to 'our own' situation in the First World, but also the marker of the distance between the Third World and First. . . ." Though this distance is marked by differences, it metaphorically speaks of similar circumstances differently contextualised. The postmodern condition of the First and the Third Worlds is based on a peculiar relationship where one rubs on the other. This is what prompts Sauri (2011:476) to state that ". . . the Third-World text is often . . . directed at the problem of locating its own situation within a wider ensemble of global

processes, if only because that situation is overtly determined by the flow of capital and culture between the centre and periphery.” There is, therefore, the tendency in the postmodernist creed to globalise its tenets by at once blurring the centre-periphery lines and recognising the subjectivities that characterise its attempt to do so. This is why, perhaps, the restructured postcolonial framework is designed to be Africa-centred but world-conscious in the wake of the realisation that Africa’s “Otherness” has been called to question by the theoretical ambiguity that surrounds its posture in light of evolving contemporary history.

Kielkiewicz (2013:49) posits that, “the drive of a historical era is its dream, social and individual goals which appear in mentality, manifest in philosophy and operate in culture.” Both the postmodern and the postcolonial are self-conscious regarding the evolution of its zeitgeist; a point which explains Kielkiewicz’s attempt at delineating the difference(s) between postmodernity and postmodernism. Postmodernity is traced to the cultural changes that erupted in the Europe of the 15th and 16th centuries which were marked by a celebration of whatever is new, liberal and challenging. It also views how time functions within historical lens and relates them to particular historical facts, dates, geography and politics, among others (Kielkiewicz, 2013:50). While being emphatic that the two terms cannot be used interchangeably, Kielkiewicz maintains that postmodernism “reflects the character of the culture” which includes “philosophy, the quality and values” (50) that set it apart from the modernist epoch. Indeed, postmodernism is anti-modernism because it “does not merely chronologically follow modernism”, it reacts against it (Barrett, 1997:17).

The strength of postmodernist criticism is founded on the faults it finds in modernist social and ideological systems, namely: absolutisms concerning truth and reality, the subjugation of the peasants, the exploitation of workers, the oppressed position of women and the Otherisation of the Third World. Amongst the characteristic traits of postmodernism include emphasis on relativity, subjectivity, skepticism, deconstruction, individualism and globalisation. In its rejection of meta narratives, postmodernism shows that it embraces different perspectives on a given issue, and in its concern for the underdogs, postmodernism gives an ideological motivation for the postcolonial discourses, as well as, aligning with the Marxist construction of the procedure for

liberty. These claims are substantiated by Congdon (2008) and Boehmer (1995), respectively. In reviewing Jameson's *Postmodernism*, Congdon (2008:4) notes that, "the book's basic thesis is that postmodernism is the form that the super structure takes when the base . . . has become almost completely mechanized . . ." Indeed, the Postmodernist-Marxist relationship is not merely metaphoric or connotative as Congdon might want to make it appear; the two frameworks relate with each other in their ideological directions and in view of human history, especially in what has come to be termed as Late Capitalism.

At the same time, Boehmer (1995:244) states that, "both the critical approaches of postcolonialism and postmodernism cross in their concerns with issues of marginality, ambiguity, fragmentary representation and dismantling of binary oppositions." It is possible to see how both the postcolonial and the postmodern hermeneutics act as interpretive procedures committed to the liberation of the oppressed and the repressed peoples and structures in culturally dominant and globalised worlds.

The postcolonial theory finds its theoretical inspiration in the postmodernism's "incredulity towards metanarratives" as well as the "radical break(s) with a dominant culture and aesthetic" (Jameson, 1979: "Foreword", xxiv, vii). In terms of aesthetics, postmodernism doubts the possibility of representing reality and opts for "irony and black humour" by rendering serious subject matter with techniques such as pastiche, parody, paradox, irony, maxiamilism and temporal distortion (Hossain and Karim, 2013:177). An aspect of postmodernist literary representation which African fiction has harnessed is magical realism which Abrams and Harpham (2009:232) describe, "representing ordinary events and details together with fantastic and dreamlike elements. . . ."

Brann (1992:4, 5) acknowledges that postmodernism is more of an intellectual movement than a coherent body of theory and goes on to problematise the "post" in postmodernism as that which "designates a kind of recollection" which in her words is "not a mere recall", but rather an "effective reappropriation of memory." The postmodern contemplation of history is part of the anti-modernist gesture which postmodernism is noted for. This sense of postmodern history is captured in Basso

(2012) when she historicises on phenomena change and Foucault's archaeology. For Foucault, according to Basso (2012:157), the historical is the a priori because, "the laws that govern the forms of experience's phenomena are immanent to the phenomena, and they can be grasped only by describing the forms themselves." History is given as textual, and the textuality of history is its historicity. This is what is problematised in Foucault's archaeology: "the relation between reality as it appears in its historicity, and transcendental" (157). The fact that in postmodernism the political and the historical coexist in the contemporary socioeconomic order which is characterised by mass culture and consumerism is succinctly observed by Foster (1987:xi), who perceives in postmodernism's periodisation neither as apocalyptic nor clean breaks but rather uneven developments marked by the conflict between the new and the old.

It should be noted, however, that there are critics like Latour (1991) who are convinced that humanity has never been modern in the first instance because postmodernism doubts its own entronement and modernity itself is founded on a problematic asymmetricality (Latour (1991:10). Apart from Latour's extreme view, postmodernism has been criticised for its complexity and opacity as this review must have been indicative. While some critics are wont to wonder if postmodernism is not a mere continuation of modernism, there are already critics who have come out to boldly assert that the postmodern era is no more and that it has even been exceeded by another which they term "post-postmodernism". But then if postmodernism is noted for its abstraction and theoretical complexity and vagueness, one is bound to ruminate on what the ideological texture of post-postmodernism would be like.

Post-postmodernism is known by different names depending on the idiosyncrasies of their theorists. Some of the names include: altermodernism, automodernity, digimodernism, hypermodernity and performatism. Neterdová (2014:13) states that contemporary literature could be described as post-postmodern. According to Bradbury and Ruland (1991:122), "postmodernism now looks like a stylistic phase that ran from the 1960s to the 1980s." If postmodernism is reduced to a stylistic phase that ended in the 1980s, the question is: has a new era begun? If it has, what name should it go by? What are its major features? And can these features be located in conventional literary texts?

Kirby (2006) is, probably, the first among philosophers and literary critics to proclaim the death of postmodernism by emphasising the shift that has occurred in contemporary cultural productions. Kirby contends that most touted postmodern texts were published before 1985 and that these texts hardly anticipated the complex technological innovations of contemporary times. As with postcolonialism, this is a situation whereby the existing theory is not keeping up with the realities detained in existing texts. Kirby situates the demise of postmodernism within the context of the growing post-theory/theory-less criticisms in the literary humanities and in the shift in the representation of realities in contemporary arts. According to Kirby (2006:Par4), “just look out into the cultural market-place: buy novels published in the last five years, watch a twenty-first century film, listen to the latest music – above all just sit and watch television for a week – and you will hardly catch a glimpse of postmodernism.”

It is technological sophistication, according to Kirby (2006:Par5), that has demolished the postmodernist structures by altering irreversibly “the nature of the author, the reader and the text, and the relationships between them.” Gone are the epochs when the author was the sole god in the agency of meaning and copyright proprietorship; in the contemporary post-postmodern era, the reader of the text becomes a partial or even a whole author of the text and its meaning (Kirby, 2006:Par6). It would then appear that, for Kirby, partial or relative authorship is a mark of post-postmodern art. Thus, it takes both the writer and the critic to author a text; but this; however, this is different from its notion in the intertextuality and Reader-Response theories.

Kirby (2006) also points to the “ephemerality” that characterises the memory of contemporary arts, especially its snapchat-like nature and non-reciprocity. Having noted the narrowing of the intellectual scope of the new century to the ideological monopoly of globalised market economies, Kirby, who uses the term “pseudo-modernism” to describe the zeitgeist of the early twenty-first century, also locates the century’s critical spirit in the “technological cluelessness” of “a world pervaded by the encounter between a religiously fanatical segment of the United States, a largely secular but definitionally hyper-religious Israel, and a fanatical sub-section of Muslims scattered across the planet”, adding that postmodernism was buried in the rubble of September 11, 2001 (Par20).

The palpable contestation between sophisticated technological forces and the neo-medieval primitivism accounts for the progressive absurdity that is, perhaps, a major character of the post-postmodern Age. This Age, for Kirby (2006:20), can be inferred when humans “constantly communicate with the other side of the planet, yet needs to be told to eat vegetables to be healthy, a fact self-evident in the bronze Age. He or she can direct the course of national television programme; but does not know how to make him or herself something to eat – a characteristic fusion of the childish and the advanced, the powerful and the helpless” (Par20). Kirby then goes on to philosophise on the malleable texture of the post-postmodern text and how it has transcended itself through technological innovations and the growing marginality of the author’s position in cultural productions.

Falconer’s (2008) paper begins by reviewing Kirby’s (2006) seminal work on the emergence of post-postmodernism. She, however, casts doubt on some of Kirby’s assumptions before going on to indicate how certain postmodernist principles could be made to historically serve the purpose of contemporary textual analysis (Falconer, 2008:2). The major preoccupation of Falconer’s paper is to establish a strategy for reading contemporary texts, of which she is too cautious to label as post-postmodern. Thus, for Falconer, what might be termed as post-postmodern should actually be made to serve as a reading strategy for recent “postmodern” novels.

As if countering Falconer’s hesitation, Vermeulen and Akker (2010:1) explicitly declare that “the postmodern years of plenty, pastiche, and parataxis are over.” They propose the term “metamodernism” as suitable in accounting for what comes after postmodernism. Vermeulen and Akker (2010:2) insist that, “metamodernism should be situated epistemologically with (post) modernism, ontologically between (post) modernism, and historically beyond (post) modernism.” They appear to align themselves with the ideological contents of Kirby’s theorisations in the use of uniquely ironic and oxymoronic terms such as “informed naivety”, “impossible possibility”, “modern naiveté”, and “pragmatic idealism” in the description of the metamodern expressive outlook.

With this type of oxymoronic self-reference, metamodernism is seen to be fluctuating between “a modern enthusiasm and a postmodern irony, between hope and melancholy, between naiveté and knowingness, empathy and apathy, unity and plurality, totality and fragmentation, purity and ambiguity” (Vermeulen and Akker, 2010:5, 6). However, they are quick to point out that the pairs are not New Historicist and Structuralist binaries but rather the inherent theoretical behaviour of how meaning is realised based on applicability.

Automodernity is a term preferred by Baya (2013) in accounting for the post-postmodern condition of contemporary arts, which, according to her, is tilted towards audience autonomy. Post-postmodernism then becomes an audience-privileging critical framework that is driven by the radical alteration of art contents through technological innovations. For Baya (2013:157), we are in the Age of the Reader which, “should be regarded not only in connection with a commitment to empower audiences, but also linked to the continually increased availability of a wide array of media outlets at continually decreasing costs, as well as the privatisation of media use that developed over the past few decades.” Technology plays an indispensable role in ushering in the post-postmodern era. It empowers the recipients/readers to the point of granting them partial, if not complete, authorship over cultural productions. It can then be said that in the post-postmodern theorisation, the commenter or critic shares authorship of the art object because it is he or she who contributes to the wholeness of the work. Baya, however, is quick to point out that her constructions should not be confused with reader-response, even though it has a basis in it.

Iggers (2009) proclaims the demise of postmodernism and also articulates what should constitute a post-postmodern theory of history. To achieve this, according to Iggers, one must, first, criticise the modernist and postmodernist conception of history, which he sees as problematic. For instance, modernism perceives history as a reconstructed phenomenon while in postmodernism, language does not reflect reality, but rather creates reality and history. The problem with postmodern history, according to Iggers (2009:123), is that it has avoided “the question of the relation between the represented and its presentation” (123). A post-postmodern view of history, in the opinion of Iggers, should involve actions taken by real human actors with realistic intents or

motives (Iggers, 2009:126). This is an interesting assertion because the Malawian literature texts selected for the study have a certain fidelity to history to the degree that extra-literary historical figures, especially Banda and the prominent rebel Ministers, are depicted in their historicity. Although the novelty of Iggers' theorisation cannot be vouched for, it lends conceptual motivation for this research and also pushes back the frontiers of "postcolonial formalism".

The enduring hegemony in gender relations, in an era following postmodernism, forms the thesis of Braidotti's (2007) article. She tends to see the post-postmodern in the lens of metamodernism, especially its indefinite definability and hysterical oscillations between historical longing and excitement in a political economy influenced and driven by a deep sense of dread and frenzy (Braidotti, 2007:65). Braidotti (2007:65) also decries the re-emergence of master narratives in the moulds of "market economies, biological essentialism, evolutionary biology and psychology," with their own pattern of deterministic tendencies. The interrogation of these grand narratives has revealed the existence of a "new" set of Otherness across the entire spectrum of humanities. These "Others", according to Braidotti (2007:66), are "feminist, postcolonial, black, youth, gay, lesbian and transgender countercultures." It is this whole new context of Otherness – situated within new technologies and the dominant market economy – that the post-postmodern feminist critique can be sited. In other words, how does the woman fare in a radically transformed ideological landscape where technology, market economy and mass culture are the prevalent modes of interpreting reality?

This inquest believes that if the post-postmodern is to be contextualised for Africa, Braidotti's approach provides the best opening and possibility. For instance, in discoursing the relationship between postcolonialism and post-postmodernism, it should be possible to see how Africa, the backward Other, has fared in a world where the dominant metropolis has been transformed by technological advances and the market economy. In this fresh postcolonial context, such a relationship with post-postmodernism should be seen within the context of inhuman leadership in Africa in relation to the First World that has marched steadily on, armed with technological know-how and an overwhelming economic strength that continues to impact negatively on the African continent.

Nevertheless, the reconstituted postcolonial is not only about the technological implications of a transformed society, it is also inclusive of the shifts in conceptions of reality and the modes in which ideas could be conceived, received and retrieved. For one, there is the sense of paradoxical absurdity that defines the African situation: one of the richest continents on earth yet remains one of the poorest; her leaders are adults whose actions mostly gravitate towards the childish; she glories in her cultural past but has it disseminated through western technologies. These constitute the sites of the post-postmodern in a reified postcolonial Africa: the fact that six hours away on an airplane separates a throbbing and bustling European metropolitan Centre from a darkly lit, restively quiet and poverty-ridden African postcolony. It is the same world but different civilisations. One can find the ironic paradox expressing its absurdity in Boko Haram which hates western education but uses bombs, a product of western education, to destroy itself and the world it seeks to control.

Developments in Malawian literature

This section of the review is necessary in order to take stock of what has transpired in the literature of Malawi over the years, noting the areas that have preoccupied researchers and the ones that require scrutiny or scholarly attention. It takes a bird eye's view of some of the important milestones in Malawian literature, especially the critical outlook on such issues as politics in relation to cultural production; the availability of texts; major critical concerns, as well as the current state of affairs in the literature and criticism of Malawi. The review would also necessitate a case being made for scholarly linkages across the continent because of the similarities in the issues to be raised in the review across the continent.

Moto (1999) attempts to trace the development of Malawian literature from 1964 to 1994. Moto's major concerns include the nature of the relationship between politics and literature in Malawi, the contribution of Missionaries to the development of early literature, the language question in Malawian literature, the portrayal of women in Malawian literature, contemporary issues in the literature and, most importantly, the critique of literature written in Chichewa. Moto's work is mostly dedicated to the analysis of poetry and plays. Indeed, it should be noted that as far as Malawian literature is concerned, poetry and drama are more established genres, in that order,

than prose. This situation can be easily linked to the three decades of Banda's autocratic rule which not only affected Malawi's literary output but also forced writers to pay attention to poetry, which is the shortest of the three genres and relatively the easiest to put out. The prose genre in Malawian literature may have most recently come to blossoming and fruition, but its criticism, by all indications, is still fledgling; a situation which has informed the study's choice of prose works in Malawian literature for analysis. In devoting so much space to the analysis of women's depiction in poems and plays, Moto acknowledges the oppressed state of Malawian women, which has indeed been factored into the postcolonialist framework that will direct the study of the selected works in the research.

The fact that Malawian literature is mediated by history is also evident in Moto's use of history in anchoring of his critique. In this text by Moto also, Malawian literature is shown to be inextricably linked to Malawian politics, even as works drawn from the oral tradition of the Malawian peoples are seen to be deeply political and politically conscious. In the end, Moto's vision of Malawian literature is realistically bleak and calls for the collective and concerted efforts of all stakeholders if progress must be made (Moto, 1999:185).

In his review of Moto's *Trends in Malawian Literature*, Mthatiwa (2008) praises Moto for undertaking, so far, the most comprehensive and in-depth analysis of Chichewa literature, noting that although critical works have been attempted on literature written in Chichewa, nothing substantial or widespread in terms of critiques have been carried out up till date (Mthatiwa 2008:109). Also Mthatiwa states that, "lack of criticism for works by Malawians has seen the names of many important writers fading into oblivion" (Mthatiwa, 2008:109). This assertion by Mthatiwa reinforces the observation on the dearth of critical materials on Malawian literary works and underscores the major motivation behind the study, which is carried out with the intention of generating critical materials in Malawian literature and making the same available in the African critical milieu.

Englund (2004) critiques Moto's (1999) interpretation of gender relations in the novels of Willie Zingani, which are mostly written in indigenous languages. Englund

questions Moto's critical prism that allows the outcome of his criticism to be at variance with the one Englund has undertaken in his paper. The differences could mostly be attributed to the opposing political orientations of the two writers. While Moto sees progress in the portrayal of gender relations in the post-Banda era, Englund observes how this seemingly positive depiction of women betrays the extra-literary realities in the condition of women in Malawi. Englund (2004:170) opines that, "Moto's interpretations of Zingani's novels are an example of political expediency in literary criticism, encouraged by the self-congratulatory rhetoric of a post-authoritarian regime and the expectations of its foreign sponsors." Englund's paper reveals how the successive regimes exploit the gender agenda for political and economic gains, instead of engendering sincere commitment to lifting Malawian women out of poverty and other forms of oppression. Englund's analysis vilifies the lip service paid to the alleviation of the continuous suffering of Malawian women by politicians. It should be reiterated that the postcolonialist framework has a gender component which the researcher intends to deploy in interrogating women's oppressed position in relation to the leadership posturing in Malawi.

Many salient issues can be deduced from Zeleza's (2002) article entitled "The Politics of Social Science Research in Africa", chief of which are how politics permeates every aspect of the individual's life, the development challenges facing contemporary Africa and the fact that multi-faceted African problems demand a multi-dimensional theoretical construction in order to effectively address them. While the postcolonialist framework is put forward as capable of meeting Zeleza's recommendation, there are reservations about Zeleza's wish for Africa to be integrated into the "unfolding global system" in spite of his earlier concession that Africa has not truly benefitted from the incidence of globalisation (2002:10). The truth is that Africa is ill-equipped for such integration and it is more likely that she would easily be overwhelmed, having hardly put any structures in place that would ensure her proper participation in the interdependent networks that currently operate in a globalised world. To get to this level, it is this study's stance that African leadership has to be galvanised towards bringing the continent out of its perpetual state of dependence. It is only an independent Africa with sound leadership that can cope with the residual pressures of imperialism which continue to operate in the globalised market economy.

Hayes (2013) probes the points of intersection amongst human rights, gender and AIDS scourge in Southern Malawi. The AIDS pandemic is a central issue in Malawian literature and politics, having claimed the lives of so many. However, Hayes is interested in how the oppressed and vulnerable station of women has worsened the possibility of their avoiding infection. She factors into her analysis the cultural milieu in Malawi where the girl-child is socialised to be pleasure-givers while men are groomed to be sexual aggressors (Hayes, 2013:351). Hayes then goes on to outline how women's problems, especially those related to vulnerability to HIV infection, have evolved with societal changes from the autocratic times of Banda up to the contemporary times. In Hayes' opinion, the rhetoric or practicality of human rights and political freedoms have hardly rubbed off on the issue of gender equality. This is because the re-invention of culture and traditional values implicitly undermines the rights of women.

Lwanda (2002) presents startling facts on the Malawian AIDS situation. Apart from exposing the sexual hypocrisy during the Banda regime that aided in the spread of the deadly virus and the politically-motivated denial in government quarters that greeted the initial reception of the AIDS inception, Lwanda (2002:153) notes that, "as recently as 1997 only 21 per cent of Malawian women had ever had sex with partners using condoms." He also states that among those aged 15 to 19, 85 per cent of AIDS patients were females. This figure weighs quite differently from the males whose average age of prevalence of infection was put at 30. Kamlongera (2007) is also concerned about the traditional practices that put the health of young Malawian girls at risk. Particularly, Kamlongera takes a critical look at the *fisi* (hyena) culture, a custom practised in some parts of Malawi during initiation rites where a man (*fisi*) is hired to sleep with female initiates to mark the end of some of the initiation rites (Kamlongera, 2007:81). These issues are germane to this study because some of the primary sources selected for analysis, including Chimombo's *Hyena Wears Darkness* and Tiyambe Zeleza's *Smouldering Charcoal*, depict these harmful traditional practices and how their effective control or management largely rests on the quality of leadership at all the levels of societal structures.

The effect of this traditional practice is life-spanning in the sense that it psychologically humiliates and dehumanises the girl child who grows into adulthood believing in the superiority of the aggressive male and the necessity of violent or forced sex. It is instructive that Komlongera links the persistence of the *fisi* culture to the complacency of the Malawian authorities who have often been observed to appropriate tradition for political gains. This justifies the deployment of the reviewed postcolonialist framework in this research because it allows the interrogation of leadership against the existing oppressed structures in the selected primary texts.

Among the issues that reflect the oppressed position of Malawian women are those which revolve around their dancing, which Malawian literature and criticism have critiqued over time – both in the Banda and the post-Banda dispensations. While both Mkamanga (2000) and Gilman (2009a) have posited that dancing is a cultural heritage which is highly valued in Malawi, they have, also, noted the continuous exploitation of women’s dancing by successive post-independence regimes. Gilman, who has been overtly keen on Malawian women’s dance-critique sub-genre, has also gone a step further by the deployment of Bakhtin’s dialogic in interpreting the Malawian women’s dancing at a political rally (Gilman, 2009b).

In her work, Gilman examines the interaction among genre, agency and meaning in social and communicative engagements during performances and how they may give out unintended but important and revealing information about unbalanced power relations among individuals and groups on a dialectical paradigm (Gilman, 2009b:335). Gilman contends that in a complex performance such as Malawi political rally, notwithstanding the amount of hegemonic influence exerted by the power structures, instances abound where the subordinated subjects manage to get their messages through to the overlords. For instance, Gilman observes that the fact that women dancers are made to sit on the ground metaphorically shows their lower status as against the privileged men and the elites in their exalted seats in the political arena. Again, Gilman (2009b:355) states that, “the poorer quality of the sartorial presentations of women [is] one more indication of the contradictions between [President] Muluzi’s claims to be committed to poverty alleviation and the reality where a large percentage of the population remained visibly poor”. Gilman’s work is helpful to this research

because it gives insight into the complex nature of the Malawian competitive discourses, especially in terms of what the authorities want the world to believe about what the state of women is and what actually obtains. This shows that the scrutiny of texts and con-texts in order to unravel “truth” in a postmodern era of “unstable instability” in the depiction of life in arts cannot be overemphasised.

Minton and Knottnerus (2008) detail the continuous oppression of Malawian women in spite of the advent of democratisation in the country. They claim that this is owed to the institutionalisation of ritualised duties in the aftermath of the traditional chiefs’ loss of authority during and after the Banda regime. According to Minton and Knottnerus (2008:182), the unequal posturing of women is reflected in their being “limited in business matters and their understanding of their rights and privileges.” The statistics presented by Minton and Knottnerus is indicative of the disadvantaged position Malawian women occupy in the scheme of things. It is important to observe that not only is this situation linked to the leadership lacuna in Malawi, but also to the underdevelopment of the Malawian society. In other words, the liberation of the Malawian women is for the collective good of the Malawian society. Minton and Knottnerus’ work gives motivation to this research because the repositioned postcolonial theory has an important gender component that is tied to the leadership.

Munthali and Zulu (2007:150) investigate how the timing and role of initiation rites in Malawi prepare young people for responsive sexual and reproductive behaviour. The authors appear to present the positive roles of the initiation rites in helping children graduate from childhood to adulthood, as well as engendering their sexual awareness in the transformation process. However, Munthali and Zulu (2007) are also concerned with the abuses inherent in the rites like the exposure of young people to diseases like the dreaded HIV/AIDS and high risk sexual behaviour, which could result in unwanted pregnancy for the girl and lead to the consequent jeopardisation of their future. Although Munthali and Zulu are not explicit in establishing a direct relationship between leadership and the persistence of these initiation rites, this study is of the opinion that the appropriation of traditional institutional practices by the successive leaderships in Malawi has indirectly encouraged the existence of these rites. Munthali

and Zulu's idea that timing is of the essence is commendable, however, it would take a responsive and responsible leadership to bring about the much-desired change.

There is a corroboration of Minton and Knottnerus' submission on the place of Malawian women in contemporary epoch marked by democratisation and liberalisation in Semu (2002). Despite the socio-political changes that have taken place in Malawi, Semu (2002:77) opines that, "a cultural discourse that presents contradictions and ironies regarding women's status may limit the extent to which these processes are translated into automatic and predictable gains for women." Semu paints a picture where most of the state instruments that guarantee women's rights and emancipation have been worked out and rendered in theory, but not in practice. The absence of political will in enforcing women's rights is not unconnected, according to Semu, to the well-known tendency in Malawian leadership to twist cultural values into vague and ill-defined roles in relation to women's progress and liberation (Semu, 2002:78). Semu traces the history of female oppression and neglect from precolonial time through the days of Banda to the post-Banda era. She notes that precolonial politics conveyed power on the males even in matrilineal settings that existed in places like Malawi.

In the colonial era, Semu posits that the activities of the missionaries and colonial authorities did not encourage the empowerment of women because colonial education was male-privileging with all its Victorian tendencies. The Banda regime's appropriation of the *Mbumba* tradition resulted in a striking paradox where women only possessed token power while the real power remained with the men. The rhetoric of female empowerment continues after Banda, with legal and institutional reforms that are meant to protect and empower women. However, all these are mere conceptual efforts meant as image-laundering directed at gaining the approval of the international community and aid-granting agencies which use human rights freedom and gender liberation as conditions for supporting regimes in Africa.

Thus, in Malawi currently, politics is played with women's liberation. This, perhaps, justifies this research's intention to interrogate leadership in relation to the oppressed women in the selected texts. Though Semu wonders why women have not taken advantage of their numerical strength and the matrilineal nature of the Malawian

society to empower themselves politically and economically, this inquest sees a situation where any realistic approach to the empowerment of Malawian women must involve the willingness of the leadership, which is male-dominated.

Malawian literature, by all indications, did not fare well under the regime of Kamuzu Banda. Mphande (1996), for instance, reports on the repressive measures taken by Banda's dictatorship to control literary outputs in Malawi. These include the amendment of the Penal Code and the change of the definition of sedition to go beyond inciting the public to include taking violent actions against the government to include expression of differing opinions, even those fictionalised in creative works (Mphande, 1996:81). Banda also set up the Censorship Board, which vetted all literary and cultural productions for signs of criticism against the regime. Mphande (1996:81) avers that, "it was a criminal offense punishable by imprisonment to process, import, print, publish, distribute, display, exhibit or reproduce any publication which the Board had declared 'undesirable'." The insecurity that Banda displayed towards art works, even innocuous ones, is indicative of the power that literature possesses and its ability to transform society. The study is of the belief that the exposure of African leadership to literature and criticism is one veritable way of making African leadership more self-conscious, self-responsive and people-focused.

Mphande's article also records the creative methods writers devised to escape the Censorship Board's dragnet. Writers began to turn their attention to the depiction of landscapes and weaving into this the repressive political climate of the time. There were others who turned to myths, legends and other folklorist elements in their cultures, using these oral materials to send across desperate political messages that most times slipped through the Censorship Board and got published. Among writers who exploited and appropriated the oral tradition and landscape of Malawi include Legson Kayira, David Rubadiri, Jack Mapanje, Felix Mnthali and Steve Chimombo, among others. Mapanje and Chimombo, whose works have been selected as part of the primary texts for this study, were members of the Malawi Writers Group, whose activities did a lot to sustain literary activities during the dark days of Banda.

Kalua (2016:1) reports that the Banda era witnessed the “flowering of Malawian literature.” Instead of cowering in the face of intense persecution, literature during this period increasingly mounted in its resistance to Banda’s dictatorship, even though the writers had to use the indirect route of deploying landscape metaphors and oral tradition. This act only led to an extra richness in the era’s literature. The formal creativity of those writers which was meant as an escape from Banda’s censorship brutality unwittingly resulted in the blossoming of a rich body of works that has come to define the beauty and the aesthetic uniqueness of Malawian literature. In their poetry collections, *Of Chameleons and gods* and *Napolo Poems*, Mapanje and Chimombo, respectively, draw largely from the oral tradition materials in their folklore to weave intricate and politically-conscious messages directed against the Banda regime. Kalua also critiques Felix Mnthali’s *When Sunset Comes to Sapitwa*, a collection of poems published in 1982, in which the poet uses the Malawian landscape and climatic features to send across binarised messages of doom and hope. Kalua notes that Sapitwa, as the summit of the highest mountain in Malawi, is a metaphor for Banda whose dictatorial posture towers over the country and that the idea of sunset visiting the mountain implies an end to the Banda dictatorship. In interpreting Legson Kayira’s *Detainee* (1974), Kalua notes how the naïve protagonist, Napolo, goes on a metaphoric quest or journey of self-realisation but ends up as an exile in another country due to his naivety. This happens because he does not take the warning from the story told to him by the friendly woman he meets on the way seriously. The truth is that in the world ruled by Sir Zaddock, a character that in all ramifications resembles Banda, reality is two-fold and very tricky. Thus, it requires close “reading” to decode. Certainly, this understanding of the real reality in Malawi is not for gullible minds like Napolo.

McFarlane (2002:1), having noted the perverse corruption and inhumanity that characterised the Banda dispensation, notes that “the challenge for [writers like] Mapanje was to subvert this system without producing politically controversial works or, conversely, works only decodable to the literary coterie.” However, for Chimombo, the legend of the serpent, Napolo, appears to be the most dominant folkloric material in his works, especially his poetry. Napolo is a mythical serpent in Timbuka folklore known for its destructive tendencies. Its occasional visitation to the physical world,

according to Chimombo (1994:ix), is usually accompanied by catastrophic events such as “landslides, earthquakes or cyclones.”

However, in his poems, Chimombo uses this python as a metaphor for the destructive and wasteful political figure(s) of the Banda era. His fondness for the serpent can be judged by its being used in most of his poems, including his (2000) novel, *The Wrath of Napolo*, which is one of the primary texts selected for this study. In his critique of the novel, Tembo (2002:87) vilifies Chimombo for the absurd and seemingly boring repetitive utilisation of the Napolo legend in his works, especially the novel; noting that the legend, perhaps, has “stopped producing the intended effect on the people.” For Tembo, it is inexcusable that even after the end of the Banda era, Chimombo is still stuck in the rut of Napolo, which was mostly useful as a tool to subvert the evil regime and not to be caught by its brutal arms. Tembo’s criticism appears plausible especially when it is seen that Chimombo even avoids using Malawi to refer to the fictional country in the novel, but rather prefers Mandania. However, in Chimombo’s defence, one can look within the purview of “post-Bandaism”, where it is understood that the residual tendencies of the previous era endure in contemporary Malawi. A good example is being subtly targeted by the authorities for holding overt critical opinion on political issues. Chimombo’s utilisation of oral tools attests to the timelessness of these oral materials in helping individuals and society make sense of their experiences.

Chimombo (2005) offers a meta-critical reprisal to the criticisms levelled against *The Wrath of Napolo* by Tembo (2002), in which Tembo accuses Chimombo of getting stuck in the rut of the Napolo folklore. Chimombo in return charges Tembo with getting stuck as well in the rut of panoptic criticism, which is based on the concept of panopticon. The Panopticon is an 18th century prison surveillance system which allows the warders vantage position to watch the inmates without the inmates themselves seeing the warders; yet knowing all the time that they are being watched. Chimombo draws analogy between this system and the type of literary criticism practised by critics like Tembo, who merely follow in the footsteps of their masters with no creativity or innovative thinking of their own. In other words, they are willing to interpret a text based on traditional rules even when the text begs to be interpreted differently (Chimombo, 2002:115). Chimombo goes on to list many works of his such as *The*

Basket Girl, Sister! Sister!, The Rainmaker and *Breaking the Beadstrings*, which do not have the Napolo myth in them. This leads him to wonder how Tembo arrived at his conclusion and hasty generalisation.

In a 2010 interview granted to J. Lee, Chimombo, perhaps conscious of the charges against his seeming obsessive preoccupation with the Napolo legend, contentedly declares, “I have written about Napolo as I heard it from my relatives, but also people who actually witnessed the event. People are being incarcerated. People are changing, all sorts of things are happening, which resembled what it was like during the Napolo days. . . .” (Lee, 2010:38). Indeed, there are still many Napolos alive, well and operating in contemporary Malawi. These Napolos hide in political cloaks, patiently awaiting their turn to ascend the leadership hill of Malawi and unleash earth-shaking evils on the people. For every Napolo, however, there is an “Mbona”. While Napolo is known for its destructive spirit, Mbona, as a foil, is benevolent. Through the interrogation of leadership in African literature, this research hopes there will be an enthronement of the Mbonas who would transform the continent from its current dependent and poverty-stricken posturing to a developed entity that can compete favourably with the rest of the world.

Chalamanda’s (2002) thesis is preoccupied with the idea of change and transition through a comparative study of South African and Malawian literatures. Her work examines how literature explores and shapes change, making striking and useful assertions on the commonalities between South African and Malawian postcolonial situations. For instance, Chalamanda notes the inherited institutional structures from colonial rule still largely in operation in the two countries. She concedes, however, that instruments such as the English language have been localised and adapted to suit the local cultural milieu. This researcher finds Chalamanda’s words to be a statement of huge import because the adaptation of the colonisers’ language has been the responsibility of the colonised and has gone a long way to reducing the blame game that has preoccupied Africa’s postcolonial criticism for a long time now. Chalamanda further makes a statement that gives an ideological motivation to the current study when she avers:

With the internalization of repression after the two countries [Malawi and South Africa] left the British Empire, comes a continuing shift in responsibility away from a culture of reproach directed at an external colonizing force, to a search for some culpability for its problems within, which is [a] much more agonizing, heartrending process that cannot rely on an easy defensive mobilization against an outside colonizing force, but necessitates a difficult examination of a fractured self (Chalamanda, 2002:224).

It is obvious that Chalamanda's statement is imbued with the reinvigorated postcolonial value. There is an increasing awareness among postcolonial scholars that a paradigm shift has occurred in the conceptualisation of the postcolonial interpretive procedure. As Chalamanda rightly observes, "imperial nations" are emerging in the former empires and the margins are marching towards the centre. This, therefore, necessitates a re-organisation or re-ordering of the postcolonial theory, which is what is attempted by this current research work.

The utilisation of Malawian oral tradition in the writings of many Malawian writers leads this review to the critique of the oral literature of Malawi. One of such critiques is Chimombo's (1987) survey of the oral literature research in Malawi from 1970-1986. Chimombo takes a panoramic view of the developments in Malawian orature from the precolonial through the colonial to the postcolonial periods. In the precolonial period, Chimombo (1987:487) notes the activities of the explorers who found in African cultural artefacts a treasure to be "studied, collected, and carried like gems to be stored in warehouses, museums, and private households." Depending on their professions, these explorers had different interests in these collections. For instance, the anthropologists wanted to learn the customs and traditions of the peoples; the linguists were interested in understanding the language of the peoples, while the missionaries hoped that these treasures could aid them in their evangelism.

In the colonial period, which Chimombo gives as spanning from 1900 to 1969, Malawians had started collecting oral materials in their environment compared to the precolonial period when it was only the non-Malawians who recorded these materials. Chimombo notes the lack of professionalism in these early documentations, especially the fact that some of the recordings were carried out in places far from the original

source of what were being documented (Chimombo, 1987:489). There was an imbalance among the genres which saw more narratives being collected compared to other oral aspects or subgenres like riddles and songs (Chimombo, 1987:491). With the coming of independence and the establishment of the University of Malawi, the postcolonial period of Malawian orature documentation was boosted in no small measure. Today, oral literature is a subject taught in schools in Malawi as the Hungartner-Everts (2008) study indicates. Not only that, orature has also been deployed in modern Malawian literature and has constituted part of the aesthetics of that literature.

Feldbloom (2011:par10) reports that contemporary cultural production in Malawi is dominated by spoken performances, not texts and that these performances draw from the oral tradition of the peoples at a time when the production of texts has been made herculean by prohibitive cost, poor readership and lack of a thriving book industry. It is interesting that oral performances are gaining popularity around African contemporary cultural landscape mostly. This study sees in this an opening for a post-postmodern discourse, that is, if sophisticated technologies and the social media are used in the sharing of the contents of these performances.

In this chapter, there has been a review of related literature on issues and concepts relating to the research. In the first place, the review establishes the perpetual relevance of history and politics in postcolonial criticism. This assertion is made in the face of attacks by emerging critiques that gravitate towards the apolitical and the ahistorical. The postcolonial texts and their criticism are usually more rewarding when read from the vantage point of history and politics. Malawian literature and criticism have been also noted for their predilection with history and politics. Thus, in undertaking this study, the researcher deploys historicity as a tool for retrieving extra-literary historical realities detained in the primary texts. However, this historicity is a restructured postcolonial historicity because it is used to determine the historical actualities of leadership issues in the selected primary texts. The review has also observed the shift from the postmodern zeitgeist to the post-postmodern era. However, this research proposes to use the term 'postmodern' to account for the aesthetic texture in the postcolonial centre of the primary sources since the researcher believes that the two

eras tend to coexist together. The final section of the review examines the predominant issues in Malawian literature. Such issues include the abuse of power by the Banda regime and the ones that came after it, the subjugation of women, harmful traditional practices against the female child and children in general, endemic poverty and the high rate of the AIDS scourge, among others.

The review affirms the earlier assertion by the study that certain problems persist in Malawi despite all the measures taken to check them. It is time, therefore, that fresh questions were asked to provide newer insights into the persistent and recurrent crisis in Malawi. This study proposes that such questions be directed towards the leadership. Thus, this inquest sees a relationship between leadership crisis and the developmental crisis in Malawi. Could it then be safe to say that Malawi is undergoing her current traumatic experiences because of the failure of leadership? The next chapter begins the analysis of data and focuses on how the poverty of leadership impoverishes the Malawian peoples.

CHAPTER THREE

THE POVERTY OF LEADERSHIP AND THE IMPOVERISHMENT OF MALAWIANS IN MAPANJE'S *AND CROCODILES ARE HUNGRY AT NIGHT* AND THEROUX'S *THE LOWER RIVER*

“How long will Africa be cursed with its leaders?”

- **Armah**

The Poverty of Leadership in Jack Mapanje's *And Crocodiles Are Hungry at Night*

In this chapter, the researcher applies the leadership-followership component of the re-ordered postcolonial theory to the selected primary texts, which are Mapanje's *And Crocodiles Are Hungry at Night* (2011) and Theroux's *The Lower River* (2012). Specifically, *And Crocodiles Are Hungry at Night* will be used to interrogate the repressive nature of dictatorship on the followership while *The Lower River* will account for the rich-poor component of the postcolonial framework. The thesis of the chapter is that poor leadership in Malawi leaves the citizenry impoverished in all ramifications. It situates its case study within the Malawian political context as documented in *And Crocodiles Are Hungry at Night*, which narrates the imprisonment experiences of one of Malawi's foremost writers, Jack Mapanje, who, from no faults of his, had to endure and eventually survive more than three years in Mikuyu prison from 1987 to 1991.

Mapanje's *memoirising* has an antecedent in a 1993 anthology entitled *The Chattering Wagtails of Mikuyu Prison*. His decision to make prosaic the contents of the anthology is informed by at once the need for accessibility of the verses and, more importantly, the imperative of recording history so that its invaluable lessons would not be lost to the succeeding generation of Malawian leadership and followership. Indeed, Mapanje (2011:432) believes that, “The history of a nation perhaps needs to be sketched again

and again, if only to underscore the fact that the past is embedded in the present, which in turn is embedded in the future – and that the three times are inseparable.”

The historicity captured in *And Crocodiles Are Hungry at Night* can be analysed from the remodelled postcolonial viewpoint. In this, the analysis focuses on the former “Other” that has been transformed to the “Centre”. In the larger context, this new Centre is supposed to be Africa, but the case-study context is Malawi, which is used in representative capacity. In keeping with the tenets of the reordered postcolonial framework, the “Other” is accorded a Poetic Gaze which splits it into a new centre and an “Other”. This new Centre is tagged Leadership, whereas the new “Other” is Followership. Leadership, in the Malawian milieu, as *memoirised* in *And Crocodiles Are Hungry at Night*, stands for Hastings Kamuzu Banda and his coterie of Tembo-Kadzamira factions or extractions. The narrator-persona, Mapanje, alongside the other dramatised oppressed characters in the work, constitutes the Followership. This is where the renewed postcolonial discourse of an African literary text begins; the jettisoning of Europe from the active causal frame of Africa’s postcolonial condition. Once this is done; once the perennial ambivalence in the causal relations between Africa and Europe in relation to Africa’s woes is expunged, it paves the way for a new horizon in the interrogation of Africa’s postcolonial predicament.

It should be noted that the nature of leadership reported in *And Crocodiles Are Hungry at Night* is dictatorship. Indeed, the primary text under investigation affords one the insight into the workings of dictatorship and the repressive effects it has on the followership, that is, the citizenry. It should also be kept in mind that the incidents recorded in the work constitute the historicity of the extra-literary events that occurred in Malawi under Banda. The world that Mapanje describes is one in which uncertainty and insecurity pervade. It is atmospherically overcast with fear, anxiety and an atrocious sense of foreboding. This is the Banda effect, but there is a pattern to this madness, which is noted in the opening paragraph of Book One: “When payday falls on a Friday, do not venture out . . . The lean crocodiles that protect the life president of Malawi . . . and the vicious snakes of his inner circle, will be prowling about the dry land, looking to crack the brittle bones of their presumed political enemies” (3). Mapanje’s poetics is reflected in the animal imagery which he employs in the

description of Malawian leadership. The metaphors are quite fitting. If the president is protected by crocodiles, it could be safe to infer that he is himself the King crocodile. Where the presidential aides are seen as “vicious snakes”, this is symptomatic of the characteristic craftiness, slippery intelligence and venomous actions that are dramatised as the plot of the work evolves and thickens.

The depiction of Malawian leadership, using dangerous creatures, is significant in the sense that it conjures up a collage of imagery of African leadership as that which threatens the collective existence of the followership; for if the leadership is constituted by crocodiles, the followership is nothing but helpless creatures who are at the mercies of the snapping reptiles. This is the situation in Malawi, where leadership exists to the detriment of the people, a complete opposite of what should constitute leadership ideals. Leadership as that which threatens the existence of the followership is seen within the context of the events surrounding the title of the work. Banda is seen instructing the Young Pioneers to act brutally against those who oppose his government: “Tell the police . . . But if they do nothing, I put you above the police. And crocodiles are hungry at night” (428). The implication of this statement is that those perceived to be rebellious by the government are likely to be fed to the crocodiles in the Lower Shire Valley in the dead of the night (31).

The state of the citizenry is reflective of the state of leadership at any given time. Conversely, the quality of the leadership can be inferred from the quality of the life of the followership. This is the case with the experiences depicted in *And Crocodiles Are Hungry at Night*. In keeping with the principles of the reordered binaries of postcolonialism, what is interrogated at any given point is right to the binary structure; that is, the oppressed structure. It is such “far right” interrogation that would determine the benignity or otherwise of the items left of the binary structures. Thus, in the leadership/followership structure, it is the followership that is subjected to interrogation; though this is done against the power base of the leadership. This means that each time followership is discoursed, leadership is what is constantly being called to question. Indeed, the whole horrendous narrative in the book is about the travails of Mapanje, his co-prisoners and their determination to survive such travails. Yet, it hardly leaves the reader’s consciousness the source of that travail.

Mapanje is subjected to the inhuman treatment recorded in the text because of the evil leadership that prevails in the Malawi of his time under which he serves. The deep sense of insecurity that characterises every setting of dictatorship is felt both ways – by the governors and the governed. The citizens feel insecure because their lives are not safe; the government feels insecure because it is threatened by lack of genuine trust and support from the people. An inherently insecure dictatorship such as Banda's always perceives every one of its subjects as a threat, no less the brilliant ones among them. This, perhaps, explains why everyone is a subject of suspicion in any dictatorial setting. Thus, even though Mapanje is a harmless academic who patriotically serves the University and his country, his activities are closely monitored, his words are carefully scrutinised and his actions are analysed with mischievous cleverness for any signs of rebellion. Not only this, he is shown to be occasionally tested and baited to see if he would betray the slightest hint of rebellion. Life in a dictatorship, therefore, could be likened to living as a soldier in the war front: one has to be constantly on the alert. The militarised living condition in a dictatorship speaks volumes of the state of social and psychological wellbeing of the people. In a state where everyone holds everyone under suspicion, no one can distinguish between a friend and an enemy.

Thus, however one wants to consider it, dictatorship is a form of prison that wastes or exhausts the mental resources of a people. It should then be considered double tragedy to be imprisoned in a dictatorship, which is Mapanje's fate. The truth is that a poetic contemplation of life within the walls of Mikuyu prison would reveal that it is a mere microcosm of the world outside; only that one is more restrictive than the other. What immediately strikes one is the sheer disregard for the worth of human life and dignity. This does not only occur in the prison, but also exists on the outside, from the time Mapanje is arrested. The manner in which the memoir's hero is manhandled by the state agents elicits a statement of huge import from his helpless and bewildered mother. She laments, "I've never seen any of my children or relatives treated in this humiliating manner before, even during the colonial times" (12). The hero's mother's voice quickly assumes, to the poetic analyst, the universal voice of Mother Malawi speaking for all her children, wondering why the black leadership has treated its subjects worse than the colonial masters did. This bewilderment is fuelled by the general understanding that

black leadership should be motivating and inspiring its people to compete favourably with the rest of the world.

It is interesting that Mapanje equally observes the break with the Centre-centred Africa's postcolonial discourse when he rejects the notion that most African dictators took their cruelty from the British. In his words, "do not ask me where we got this kind of arrogance. We could not have inherited it from our ancestors. We could not have got it from the British who colonised us. No. This horror that we endure is Banda's own creation. . ." (20). The quote supports the assumption of the repositioned postcolonial theory which maintains that Africa should break links with the colonial history and to take responsibility for some of her woes.

Banda's method of dictatorship is to reduce the humanity of his victims through strategic actions aimed at the degradation of the individual's dignity. For instance, the narrator describes the prison uniforms (foya) he is given as "dirty" and "rancid", full of "scabies" and "some other pus and blood weeping disease" (35). This is followed by his being stripped naked and thoroughly searched. It is instructive that the narrator describes this act as "the start of total dehumanising stripping" (36). This can be metaphorically extended to indicate that the objective of dictatorship is to strip the individual of his or her humanity and identity. Perhaps, this explains why the narrator realises his *nobody-ness* after the police inspector general asks him who he is (25). Thus, in a repressive regime like Banda's, the followership's identity is nonexistent. It is only the dictator that is visible; everyone else is a mass of nothingness. Sadly enough, the hero of this memoir only realises this in prison.

Evil leadership is detrimental to the identity of the followership. The dictator always tries everything possible to either exterminate or alter the identity of the followership. Alex, a character, knows this when he tells Mapanje in prison that Banda's ultimate intent is to erase them from history (45). Banda's interest in the history and orature of his people is to help him project his identity while at the same time diminishing that of his perceived political enemies. Thus, dictatorship usually survives through manipulation, distortion and extortion. However, this manipulation creates a counter discourse which immediately results in the existence of conflicting historical narratives

competing for survival and supremacy. This way, it could be said that the perennial struggle between leadership and followership in any dictatorship is the struggle for survival – both existential and textual. It is what Alex Mataka tells Mapanje when he says, “You have to survive here; it’s the only way to beat the dictator” (48).

The importance of surviving a dictator in the textual sense is preached to Mapanje by Alidi Disi, the prison prefect, when he urges the hero to write down all his experiences in dungeon for future generation, “so that this does not happen to our children’s children” (430). The relationship between literal and metaphoric, existential and textual and survival is that the latter is hardly possible without the former. That the hero of the narrative realises this right from the beginning is instructive and it is that which gives him fortitude in all his travails.

It is for the instinctive, timeless and universal urge to survive that Mapanje endures more than three years of a most cruel form of incarceration to tell his story. This story acts as a counter discourse to Banda’s. It is through this that Banda’s attempt to attribute the victory at independence solely to himself failed in the long run. It is also through this that his attempt to trace the root of the Malawian identity only to his Chewa ethnic group did not succeed, among other invented concepts and ideologies. The survival of Mapanje also means the survival of the historicity being investigated in this research.

Against the façade of internal stability which Banda wanted the international community to believe exists in Malawi, Mapanje reports that “there have been two armed rebellions against Banda” (72) shortly after the Cabinet crises in 1964. Led by Henry Masauko Chimpembere and Yatuta Chisiza, respectively, the first and the second rebellions sought to restore political sanity in a polity that was gradually losing its cerebral wholeness and descending into anarchy. Their eventual failure meant that Banda would be able to consolidate his power, which he did in 1971, by getting himself elected president for life. This action sparked the third rebellion which was led by Albert Muwalo and Focus Gwede. Again, this rebellion was not successful because of the tribally divisive politics in Malawi. The divide-and-rule trick which had worked for so long for the British continued to work for Banda. However, there is a reordered

postcolonialist lesson to gain from the quelled rebellions. It is indicative of how followership should resist evil leadership knowing in certain terms that they will triumph eventually as was the case of Banda.

Apart from the fact that dictatorships feel threatened by the cerebral individuals and activities in their domains, dictatorships are often founded and made to thrive on sheer illiteracy, ignorance and darkness. This is, indeed, the case with Banda's regime. The hero of the memoir reports how his conference attendance, both local and international, is always monitored and how his words and ideas are closely watched. Another sadly interesting event is how the publication of Mapanje's *Of Chameleon and gods* is greeted by the Malawian authorities. It does not matter that the book celebrates Malawian pastoral landscape nor that it helps to place the country on the world's literary map. What the authorities notice is the subversive politics in the anthology, even though there is hardly anything explicit to suggest so. Mapanje writes that instead of being celebrated or commended, "he received stern admonition from relatives, colleagues and friends that the poems had displeased" the regime (89).

The fear of intellectualism that is observable in any dictatorship is dramatised and ritualised in Banda's Malawi. This is made more obvious by the activities of the Censorship Board. All manuscripts must be sent to the Board for vetting and approval before publication. The course contents in schools up to the university were highly regulated. For instance, in the teaching of Malawian history, it was considered a crime to mention the names of the nationalists who fought for independence. The result of all these are a culture of accumulated untruths, the creation of a vast wasteland in knowledge and the ultimate destruction of talents and creativity. This is how poor leadership has led to the literal and metaphoric poverty of the Malawian peoples.

There is this apparent mindlessness and insanity associated with the actions of a dictatorial leadership. The morbid fear of criticism by Banda's regime leads to the planting of "spies, agents and informers amongst the academic staff, students, administrative and support staff, who report to them regularly" (214). In the prison, the hero-narrator regrets his apparent naivety and for not paying heed to the various warnings given to him by "college cleaners, messengers, drivers, colleagues" to "watch

the colleagues who reported the subversive activities of supposed rebel lecturers to the principal or indirectly to his uncle” (25). Tales such as this intertextualise with the Orwellian *Nineteen Eighty-four* scenario where the existence of the thought police precludes freedom of thought! The fact that everyone spies on everyone gives rise to distrust among friends and colleagues which further deepens the sense of doubt, uncertainty and insecurity in the country. This is sheer madness driven by illiteracy.

Mapanje reports a case where the Banda regime “directed his censorship board not to ban any writings by William Shakespeare” (214). This is done apparently in the belief that such works would not be critical of his regime! This proves to be very tragic for the regime because in teaching plays such as *Macbeth*, *Julius Caesar* and *King Lear*, contemporary political situations in Malawi were implicitly alluded to owing to the timeless and universal qualities of these works. Indeed, it would not have occurred to Banda that his actions had antecedents in history and literature and that he could not escape the well-known poetic nemesis no matter how hard he tried.

Even the way a text is arranged or structured can have far-reaching effects or consequences in a dictatorship. Mapanje relates the story that trailed the publication of *A Handbook for African Writers*. James Gibbs, the editor of the book, has committed the unpardonable offence of placing Mapanje’s name first, followed by Malawi, his country of origin, before making comments about the state of politics and its effects on the growth and development in that country (190). It is the University librarian, Steve Mwiyeriwa, who draws Mapanje’s attention to the tragic political implications of the arrangements in the book. Mwiyeriwa says, “If I put this book on the shelves, the spies, informers and agents will get hold of it, and you and I will be gone. . .” (191). Even Mapanje finds Gibbs’ action inexcusable because, having served for a considerable number of years in Banda’s Malawi, Gibbs should have known that “it’s only the life President’s name that’s supposed to be above anything here . . .” (191).

And Crocodiles Are Hungry at Night also records the ethnicity, marginalisation, nepotism and injustice that defined the Banda dictatorship. It has already been reported how the tribal Chewa identity was projected over the identity of other ethnic groups. In Banda’s Malawi, it was those close to the source of power who stood to benefit a great

deal. The author writes that the regime lays off well-qualified workers “because they do not belong to the president’s or his cronies district or region or ethnic community” (199). Furthermore, appointments and juicy contracts are awarded to party loyalists and supporters. Corruption and nepotism are the lubricants that oil the wheel of dictatorships.

Ironically, the regime requires the support of the people in order to claim and flaunt its legitimacy to the outside world. Considering that everyone was forced to sing the praise song of Banda, it is inconceivable that the regime failed to see that the people were more or less humouring him. In worshipping Banda, words in sacred hymns were replaced with other words that aimed to create a god out of him. According to Mapanje, this is a trick everyone plays to survive because everyone knows the consequences of not playing along (212). It is also sadly ironic that it is only in prison that a writer as brave as Mapanje is able to articulate his criticism of the Banda regime (214).

The Malawian government, led by Banda, is replete with many contradictions, paradoxes and absurdities. For instance, Banda prides himself of being an Elder in the Scottish Presbyterian Church, yet his people live in fear and misery. At the same time, his Christian orientation notwithstanding, Banda has no scruples about appropriating certain aspects of Malawian culture to perpetrate his regime, even though he is known to have an unwavering English sartorial taste. Again, Banda is shown to be constantly claiming that Malawi enjoys peace, stability and prosperity, when the true situation was that whatever political stability was there, came at a greater cost of extensive human rights abuses, torture and through the silencing of dissents amidst a most horrible poverty situation.

At the height of the international pressure to have Mapanje released, the regime’s reaction is to request the hero to address a written apology to the Inspector General, stating clearly that he has truly repented. Repented of what? It does not say. A crime he did not commit? Indeed, as Mapanje writes, “it’s daft to apologise for being detained” (285). However, this is part of the postmodern absurdities that are identified with dictatorial leaderships.

Under Banda, the evil of Malawian leadership takes on an emotional dimension when the hero's family visits him in prison. And, of course, it must be mentioned that this visit comes after numerous requests had been rejected. The author describes the visit thus: "I offer my hand first to Mercy my wife, then Judith our first born, Lunda our second born; and as for our son, Likambale, I grab hold of him and put him on my lap . . . an outburst of tears runs down our cheeks" (291). The ungodly wiles of the Banda regime in the misinformation and tarnishing of opponents' image are manifested in the question Mapanje's son asks him: "Dada, is it true you are here because you stole something in the University?" (292). In response to this question, the narrator writes that "Judith and Lunda look away, more tears pouring down their cheeks" (293). Apparently, it is not only Mapanje that has been subjected to traumatic experiences; even his innocent children have not been spared the ugly treatment, as lies after lies have been told them – all in an effort to break the man and his family. This attests to the thesis that evil leadership has overarching effects, reaching down to even the lowest societal stratum. When Mapanje enquires from his son how he got the idea that he stole from the University, the boy responds: "Boys at our school mock me so when we play" (293).

It is after this that Mapanje gradually comes to the knowledge that so many excuses had been advanced for why he is in detention. For one, it is said that he once boasted, having got himself drunk, that he was the only one who travels on British Airways first-class, and that the Life President does not (298). Again, Mapanje is assumed to be cooling off in Mikuyu prison because he once granted an interview to the BBC in which he is accused of informing the BBC that Cecilia Kadzamira was eyeing Banda's position upon his demise, among other alleged damaging politically-motivated pieces of misinformation (298). These statements are indicative of the level of desperation dictatorships could descend into in order to stay relevant and powerful while their presumed enemies are weakened and demoralised.

The memoir illustrates that most of the administrative decisions of Banda are seen to be myopic and mostly driven by ethnic sentiments and political vendetta. A good instance is the decree by Banda that every teacher must work in their region, a decision that is based on false allegations by the president's cabal that teachers from the northern

region were sabotaging the education system by deliberately under-teaching children from the southern and central regions. It is obvious that Banda and his inner circle never extensively brainstorm on the effects of such a decision and so could not see how it would “disrupt and restrict movement, work and marriage of Malawians between regions” (306). Or, perhaps, such consequences did not matter as long as their primary interest has been served.

One cannot discuss Banda’s dictatorship without touching on the issue of death, whether literal or figurative. In the first place, Banda jails his presumed political enemies in the hope that they would not survive the harsh prison conditions. This is because their not surviving will help to further his agenda of reducing the number of the teeming and teething political dissenters. The Mikuyu prison conditions are deliberately calibrated to ensure the rapid deterioration of the inmates’ health, which in most cases results in death. The hero-narrator observes this when he writes: “. . . in such a short time, prison has reduced me to bones” (94). Apart from the author’s observation that hardly does a week pass by without a corpse being removed from the prison for burial, there is also the deadly ritual which takes place in January and August. In this case, the chief commissioner of prisons visits the Mikuyu prison to take out six condemned prisoners for hanging (128). The narrator does not miss the description of the mental torture associated with waiting for one’s name to be called. He writes: “The prison is on edge. Totally. My heart continues to pound with fear. I begin to panic. Anything can happen in this country. It could be me they have come to grab for execution” (128).

The death that lurks outside the prison walls is more sinister and clandestine. It is from this atmosphere that the title of the work is taken. It is the death of being fed to the hungry crocodiles in the Shire River Valley. The fear of being used as food for crocodiles kills the courage in most Malawians who dare not raise a voice against the evil regime (204). And if one were to go by Soyinka’s assertion that the man dies in him who keeps silent in the face of tyranny, it could be easy to see how most Malawians have died metaphoric deaths in the days of Banda.

Another famous methodology of death in the Banda regime is “accidentalisation” – a coinage by the Malawian Writers’ Group to account for the explanations the state gives when trying to convince the people that their political enemies were involved in an accident, and not assassinated. The term aptly applies to the murder of the “gang of four” or “Mwanza Four”; Dick Matenje, David Chiwanga, Aaron Gadama and Twaibu Sangala, the MPs and MCP figures who opposed Banda’s attempt to hand over power to the Kadzamira-Tembo family, rather than conducting democratic elections. It has been reported that after murdering these brave MPs, one of whom had a nailed driven into his head, their assassins attempted to fake an accident by packing their mangled bodies in a car and rolling it down a slope in Mwanza district. Of course, not many people in Malawi believed that the MPs died in an accident.

Death, in Banda’s Malawi, is also encapsulated in the regime’s presumption that political enemies have “disappeared”. Malawian followership suspected of being critical against Banda’s policies are made to disappear without a trace and this happens only under “the maddest and most sadistic of witches on earth” (206). Apart from the literal death, which litter the country’s *lifescape*, so many other things are known to have died in Banda’s Malawi. One is what the author refers to as “the death of debate”, which he is certain is one of the reasons for his detention. In a country where differing opinions are frowned upon, it is dangerous to be a conventional academic. The writer traces “Banda’s intolerance of debate and freedom of speech and expression” (196, 197), to the support shown to the 1964 sacked Cabinet Ministers by some students at Soche Hill, Chichiri and Mpemba campuses.

The subsequent tackling of debating societies by the Banda regime was as a result of the regime’s fear of the issues that could possibly form the topics of these debates and their implications for the power-drunk regime. However, it is the author’s belief that “. . . the development and success of any future democratic government and open society in Malawi will depend on the extent to which its leaders will allow serious debate to bloom in schools, colleges, the University, parliament newspapers, the radio, television . . .” (200). The next section of the research accounts for some of the postmodernist features in *And Crocodiles Are Hungry at Night*.

Postmodernist Features in *And Crocodiles Are Hungry at Night*

It is only in a dictatorship such as Banda's that the prisoners resort to superstition to know when and how they would be freed. It is interesting that what constitutes a sign of their hope of being released is a "flock of geese flying in circles in the clear blue sky" (351). They number twenty-two and it is believed that the same number of prisoners would be released, according to the character Pingeni. There is a kind of postmodern absurdity that the narrator observes in "this sudden child-like elation of these senior cellmates at the sight of the geese, which the academic in the narrator doubts, to his own detriment. For when in February of 1991 twenty-two political prisoners are released, Mapanje finds, to his dismay and chagrin, that he is not among them. The hero-narrator laments his fate thus: "It suddenly dawns on me that I have actually been left behind; I have not been released with the others. Why? What wrong have I done anybody? My hands begin to sweat, my legs tremble. The shock is unbearable. I feel dejected. Thoroughly. Tears begin to glaze my eyes. The number of those gone is twenty-two. I recall the geese that we saw. . ." (338).

Perhaps, a more logical reason for his not being released along with others at the time is advanced after his eventual release in May 1991. MacWilliam Lunguzi, Chief of Security and Intelligence, tells him that at a point he was a political prisoner never to be released from prison apparently because of the anger of the people close to Cecilia Kadzamira-Tembo circles about the international pressure being mounted for his release (362). However, it should be noted that this supposedly scientific or more logical reason does not in any way render the Mikuyu superstition any less useful, as its efficacy is testable in the eventual release of the prisoners as well as in its ability to help the hopeless prisoners cope with and survive their condition.

Dreams also constitute another postmodern technique ingeniously deployed in the work. In a precarious prison condition, confronted by frustration and hopelessness, dreaming becomes a coping mechanism and it aids the projection of the individual's subconscious wishes and aspirations. And, perhaps, as Disi helps Mapanje interpret his second set of dreams, dreams could serve as Fate's manifestation of our future in the present time. The author's dream of landing in England, meeting the Prime Minister and later finding himself teaching British children is, perhaps, his subconscious way of

compensating for the present pains he is made to go through in incarceration. But the Joseph-in-prison scenario is alluded to and reenacted in Disi's attempt at interpreting the hero's dreams. He tells the author, "Mrs Thatcher's people are winning the struggle for your freedom; you will travel outside this country to work after your liberation . . . think of the swallows as they fly from place to place: that'll be your life after this" (280, 281). It is exactly what happens in the end because not only is Mapanje finally released but he also travels abroad with his family, where he currently lives and works.

It should be noted that the gradual blurring of life/arts dichotomy is a postmodern tendency which memoirs, biographies and autobiographies make possible. There is also an element of magic realism in the near-reality texture of the dreams described in the work. Another dream which Mapanje has in prison is the one in which "all the political prisoners in Malawi have been released" (326) and how a national conference has been called to decide the political future of the nation. The rejection of imposition by the delegates at the conference foreshadows the massive protest that would soon rock the country and which would force Banda to agree to a referendum on multiparty system of governance.

The presence of the Catholic bishops and their clergy in the surreal conference points to the ominous pastoral letters which sowed the seed of the political rebellion and change in Malawi. However, the first signs of Banda's falls precede the pastoral letters and are to be found in the students' protest in a newsletter against the quota system introduced in 1987 which was intended to correct the perceived imbalance in the admission of students into the University that saw more northerners gaining admission. However, the immediate cause of the protest is the expulsion of the writers of the newsletter for daring to criticise the Kadzamira-Tembo clan (270).

It is not only dreams and superstitious assumptions that provide solace for the Mikuyu inmates; rumours also have therapeutic effects on the unfortunate souls. This is yet another postmodern irony or absurdity because in a sane society, rumours are to be discarded or authenticated and verified before being believed by well-thinking people. However, in Mikuyu prison, rumours constitute a lifeline for the inmates and are more trusted than what is reported in the papers. It is through such rumours that Mapanje and

the other inmates learn of the release of Nelson Mandela, which does a lot in giving them hope that the effect of Mandela's freedom would reverberate in Mikuyu (324).

In writing a work as grim as the experiences portrayed in *And Crocodiles Are Hungry at Night*, Mapanje makes use of postmodern irony and humour to create comic reliefs that help in lightening the elegiac mood of the memoir. This corroborates the Ibibio folkloric belief that the worst human experiences are to be survived with laughter. For instance, it is sadly ironic for Alex Mataka to tell Mapanje to "relax" on the first night he comes to prison (40), as the author equally finds himself in a situation where he does not know whether to cry or laugh off the shocked realisation of suddenly being thrown into dungeon. It is also paradoxical and ironic for Alex to refer to Mikuyu prison as "home" (45), as it exemplifies a postmodern play on realities through the creative deployment of lexical tools.

Indeed, Alex is able to use these disturbingly comforting words because he is resigned to prison life. He is a source of encouragement to Mapanje and contributes in no small measure in helping Mapanje survive the debilitating conditions in prison. The narrator recognises the two types of prisoners in Mikuyu prison: the condemned prisoners and political prisoners. "Terminal friends", a sad and tragic euphemism is used in describing the condemned prisoners. Still, Mapanje makes use of postmodern irony when he declares that both the condemned and political prisoners depend on the kitchen for survival (67).

The author has an impeccable skill for rendering very mournful situations in comical ways. Indeed, it is difficult to miss the postmodern humour in this tear-inducing narrative. While describing the horrible culinary conditions in the prison, Mapanje writes that, "three huge electric pots are bang in the middle. When TS takes the lid off the first, I see lumps of boiling porridge springing as high as the kitchen's sooty ceiling" (68). It is, therefore, no surprise that Mapanje sees this bullet-like food as "lethal", concluding that it is a miracle that the inmates survive after eating the food. He goes on to say that Banda and his cabal ought to be ashamed of themselves for feeding the prisoners with rotten food, wondering, in Brown's words, whether Banda would have survived had the British fed him and other African political detainees the

same type of food he was making the Mikuyu inmates to eat (69). History has it that Banda, alongside other Malawian Nationalists, was imprisoned by the colonial masters in the wake of the struggle for independence from Southern Rhodesia.

Life is full of so many ironies and contradictions; so is art. An interesting example is the New Building Wing in Mikuyu prison built by Focus Gwede and Albert Muwalo for detention of Cabinet Ministers after the planned overthrow of Banda. However, it turns out to be their “home” when the plot eventually fails. Mapanje writes of the significance of this event thus, “To crown the never-ending ironies of our times . . . it was Muwalo and Gwede who officially opened the New Building Wing of Mikuyu as prisoners” (75). This scenario alludes to the Biblical event where Haman ends up dying through the means he had prepared for Mordecai. There is also the case of Kalindwalo who is reported to have been welcomed to prison with a sound beating by the very lecturers he had recommended for detention (75). It could then be safely asserted that poetic justice abounds in life and in arts. This is one of the marks of postmodernism. The description of how Frank Chipasula “literally ran across the border into Zambia” pursued by the Special Branch of Banda’s regime is equally humorous (91). It is ironic for Patrick Culbertson in a letter to Dr Kadzamira to refer to Malawi under Banda as a progressive republic, given the prevailing circumstances, including the banning of Mapanje’s *Of Chameleons and gods* (150).

What could easily be observed about the ironic and darkly humorous expressions thus far exemplified is that they all grow out of the grave context of situations in the text and are tied to the actions of a group of leaders whose conscience-less deeds have raised a hellish society out of a nation that should be a paradise. Progress continues to elude such a setting even as those who should stay and develop the land are chased away into exile. Thus, when the best minds are gone, driven back to the Metropolis by the cruel whip of a rural-ised centre, the dregs left behind can only help in compounding the problem of the continent. Mapanje goes into exile in the United Kingdom where he currently resides and works, contributing immensely to the cultural development of that country and constituting a great loss to Africa and Malawi. And why does this happen? The answer is the evil leadership that continues to ravage the African continent.

In Adichie's *Americanah* (2014), the major characters: Obinze, Ifemelu and Auntie Uju, find themselves slaving abroad because of the incompetence of the political leadership back home. It is also the problem of leadership that forces Mapanje and his family to leave Malawi and be exposed to intense and shocking racism abroad as recorded in the text. Often, Mapanje is qualified for a job but because of his skin pigmentation, he is denied the position (400). Mapanje also records a case whereby a group of white youths throw eggs at the windows of the house they are staying; an action which suggests that the black family is not welcomed in the neighbourhood. Until African leadership is repositioned, Africans will continue to flock to Europe and America, where they will continue to be treated as slaves because they lack a strong and honourable home identity. This is the essence of the reified and repositioned postcolonial critique of literature; to query African leadership and with a view to challenging it to live up to its responsibilities.

Kebonang and Kebonang (2014) stress the importance of leadership to the development of any nation. They maintain that there is a difference between governance and leadership because, while governance is more about the indices for the proper operation of a state's political machinery, leadership involves individual influences in a given political setting. This researcher is of the view that leadership determines the state of governance in a polity because it is the players and the sum of their actions that constitute governance. When leadership breaks down, there is likely to be a corresponding break down in governance which would be reflected in the living conditions of the citizenry. This explains why the research attempts to link the desperate poverty in Malawi to the nature of the leadership in that country by also analysing the experiences detained in Theroux's *The Lower River*.

The Poverty of Malawians in Theroux's *The Lower River*

The Lower River documents the traumatic experiences of Ellis Hock in the most rural and inaccessible parts of Malawi which he returns to after a failed marriage with Deena in the hope that he could relive the romanticised memories he created there shortly before the country's independence. To his chagrin and dread, however, Hock returns to find a post-independence Malawi in a state of disrepair, neglect and wretchedness. He comes back to a post-independence Malawi that is dependent on foreign aids and

Western charity for existence. Against all advice, Hock heads to Malabo, a village in Nsanje near Boma, a place the narrator fondly refers to as the Lower River – “the southernmost part of the southern province, the poorest part of a poor country” (Theroux, 2012:30). However, if the country was poor when Hock served as a teacher in the pre-independence days of missionary and colonial schools, the post-independence Malabo that Hock returns to is depicted as desperately poor.

The Sena people are described as unfavourably disposed to Western civilisation owing to the nature of their culture and values. The narrator notes that “the Sena people were mocked for holding on to their traditions of child marriage, polygamy, and witchcraft” and that even though there was a school which served the entire district, “. . . fees kept most of the students away,” while others were made to stay back as farm hands (31). But all these happened in the pre-independence era. The Malabo that Hock returns to is decrepit both in human values and in quantifiable wealth. The fact that development continues to elude Malawi is captured in Hock’s observation that “from the air, the place looked just as he had left it forty years before” (43). Yet it this underdeveloped and uncivilised part of Africa that Hock and other tourists long for. The narrator notes that “Hock craved that simpler, older world he’d known as a young teacher, which was also a place in which hope still existed, because it was a work in progress” (43). Hock’s fondness for Malawi is exemplified in his having learnt the language in less than three years he spent in Malabo before his sudden departure at the news of his father’s ill health. Hock addresses the immigration officer in Malabo dialect, thus, it is instructive that the officer tells Hock that he himself has never been to Malabo – a statement which points to the distant, inadmissible and inaccessible nature of the weirdly quaint locale. It should be noted that Malabo, in this analysis, serves as a microcosm for Malawi, as the bulk of the plot in *The Lower River* revolves around the experiences of Hock in that part of the country.

The post-independence Malawi described by Theroux is one hit by the mad urge and rush for migration and exile, and this contrasts sharply with what was obtainable in the pre-independence times. When Hock tells Gilroy at the American embassy in Malawi that he is heading to Malabo, Gilroy replies that “No one ever goes there” anymore, and goes on to observe to him that people are leaving the country in droves: “Everyone

wants a ticket out” (46). Here, again, lies the postmodern paradox; while Hock is running from American civilisation to the peace and jungle of Malawi, those in Malawi are lining up at the American embassy to get a visa to escape into European and American civilisations. Hock then goes to meet Fogwill whom Gilroy describes as “one of those people that stays [sic] behind after everyone has gone home” (47). Fogwill also does his best in persuading Hock not to undertake the perilous journey to the Lower River, but to no avail. In their discussion, one sees the shocked poverty and decline the country has descended into shortly after independence, such that Independence Day comes to be seen as the happiest day the country has ever known (58).

The realities depicted in the book henceforth are an exemplification of the post-independence disillusionment that Malawians were exposed to when the country slipped into anarchy shortly after the euphoria of independence. The hopeless case of Africa is hinted at when Gilroy explains the futility of the West trying to help Africa out of her problems. It is a case of taking a horse to the bank of the river without being able to make her drink. Gilroy describes Malawi as a bottomless pit because no amount of help offered from the West can salvage the situation. There is an underlying reified and repositioned postcolonial argument in Gilroy’s words because it is only Africa that can rescue herself from her current predicament through the institutionalisation of sound leadership and an empowered followership. Gilroy points Hock to the long line of people, mostly Malawians, waiting to get their visas and informs him that the people are dying to leave the country because it is a failed state (48). Then he asks a very relevant question: “Whose fault is that?”

The above question has underlying postcolonial implications. However, in this research, it is argued that it is the evil of leadership in Africa that has thrown the continent into its present predicament. Available records, as seen in the review, indicate that after independence, Banda took certain policy steps that were not in the interest of the young and developing nation. His leadership style brought him in conflict with the cabinet ministers and their resistance resulted in the collective doom of the country which descended into thirty years of darkness and underdevelopment. The attempt, therefore, by most postcolonial critics and critiques to blame the West for providing the framework for Banda’s dictatorship is rather escapist, secondary and unrealistic.

Malawi is depicted as a country that has been driven by its leadership to a beggarly position where it has no choice but accept everything thrown at it by the West. This is seen in how Hock selects the gifts he hopes to donate to the non-existent school in Malabo, which he still believes to be there. The narrator writes that “he chose hurriedly, pointing to shelves, thinking that anything he bought would be welcomed” (50). Malawi is here presented as a beggar with no choice. Yet, the point is that in a post-independence Malawi, the country still relies on donations by sympathetic individuals and agencies for its survival. All the infrastructures built in the pre-independence times have been run down. This is shown in Fogwill’s words which he informs Hock that “the train’s not running anymore” (55) in response to Hock’s recollection of the Independence Day when he rode the colonial train to see the Ethiopian Emperor. What currently runs the country is criminality in the form of daring theft and corruption, vices induced by extreme poverty.

Fogwill intimates to Hock, to his disbelief, of the negative changes that have been taking place in the country since independence. He says he used to keep his door open at night but that these days, even dutifully locking the doors is of no use as he had been broken into countless times that there is nothing left to steal (55). Malawi is also portrayed as a milieu that is ravaged by HIV/AIDS. This scourge’s growth is believed to be multiplied by the leadership’s incompetence, complacency and utter helplessness, as well as the people’s ignorance and superstition. Fogwill who has spent many years in Malawi as a foreigner could authoritatively report to Hock that back in Malabo, the people are known to kill albinos and use them in making native medicine and potent charms. In addition, he also informs Hock that the men have turned to deflowering virgins in the hope that it will cure their HIV/AIDS infection (56).

The arrival of Hock in Malabo in the second part of the five-part book opens his eyes to the postcolonial realities in the country. The first signs that things are not as they used to be are reflected in the description of the landscape and the state of the vegetation. The author writes that “none of what he [Hock] saw from the car was lovely: the Africa of the people, not of animals. And that was its oddity, because it looked chewed, bitten, burned, deforested, and dug up” (64). At Boma, Hock observes the ruin that has

overtaken the district commissioner's house, the locking up of Bhagat's General store and the disuse and disrepair of the railway station. These are all colonial legacies lying in ruins. At Marka, when Hock asks the men about the harvest, the weather and the fishing, the responses he receives are in groans and sighs. Apparently, their tradition forbids them to voice their own misfortunes. The fact is that drought has taken over the land. This drought is symbolic of not only the physical drought, but also the political, moral and economic droughts (70).

The gap in the exchange rate between the Malawian Kwacha and the American dollar equally points to the sorry-state of the Malawian economy. When Hock enquires from the men at Marka how much they need in order to be able to afford the paraffin to burn the ominous remains of a crocodile, the men mention five hundred Kwachas which Hock places at three dollars. Such a huge gap in the exchange rate shows the developmental and economic gulf between Malawi as a postcolonial nation and the developed nations of the world. The Malabo that Hock returns to remains a jungle of no access roads years after the end of colonialism. The narrator's apt description of the area is instructive: "Manyenga slowed the bike and plunged into the bush, not a road, hardly a track, just an opening in the high grass that led through the yellow bush to a clearing, a scattering of huts, the big upright baskets on legs that were granaries, the crisscrossed paths that marked the edge of Malabo" (74, 75). Ironically, though, it is this untouched nature in Malabo that attracts Hock as he is seen in constant anxiety afraid that the place has been modernised. It takes Hock a while to come to the realisation that the Lower River he had known was gone and that in its place had grown a huge monstrosity.

The poverty of Malabo is complex, extensive and complicated. It can be traced to the gradual loss of values that can make for the development of any society. This poverty of values is directly linked to the leadership of Manyenga, the new leader of the community who welcomes Hock with what later turns out to be tragically-ominous expression: "This is your home, father" (75). Manyenga's father, now late, whom Hock had met during the pre-independence era had the right set of values which must have accounted for whatever progress was recorded in the community at the time. But with the accession of Manyenga, materialism and greed become dominant principles and

values, accompanied by the concomitant misplacement of priorities. Indeed, the Manyenga leadership style can be said to be a direct duplication of the leadership at the national scene whereby personal interests are pursued at the detriment of the collective good.

Once Manyenga sees Hock, his only interest is how to milk Hock of all cash and valuables. Manyenga directs all his creative energies, smile, word choice and hospitality into accomplishing these greedy ends. Manyenga rules over a community of children who have no education because the school the missionaries built and bequeathed the community is in ruins. Yet, when Hock requests to see the school, Manyenga's reply shows that has no interest in rebuilding the school. He tells Hock with a despairing note of fatality, "It is finished, father" (84). He is not interested in building the school, perhaps, because he does not want other community members to measure up to his level of education. This will also perpetually give him an edge over every other member of his community. In this is a parallel found in the action of the leaders in the children's village who do not want the other children to learn English so that it could be possible for them to rule over the children (177). African leadership is, thus, shown to be individualistic and selfish. This explains why the elites enrich themselves while the people they are supposed to govern languish in poverty. It can then be seen why the rich/poor component of the reified and repositioned postcolonial theory should be examined so as to see how poor leadership leads to the impoverished state of the citizens.

In the new Malabo, poverty is rife and it permeates every aspect of the society. For instance, Theroux writes that the "market day was no longer observed, because there was nothing to sell" (92). Little wonder that in the end, after Manyenga and his people had taken all the money Hock brought with him, they decide to sell him. This alludes to Gala's earlier warning to Hock, "They will eat your money . . . When your money is gone, they will eat you" (123). Malabo has become a polity that has lost all sense of humanity. The darkness that envelopes the humanity of the Sena people predisposes them to think that Hock has ulterior, rather than, altruistic, motives in coming to the Lower River. It does not take long before Hock learns that he is trapped among a people he once so loved.

Twice he tries to escape from the now dreary, dreadful and deadly village, to no avail. Manyenga has ensured that every move of Hock is closely watched. The narrator describes it thus, “. . . the whole village enlisted as his [Hock’s] helpers, and they kept him captive. They were no longer afraid of him. He would rise from his chair on the verandah and as soon as he stepped into the clearing he’d hear a sharp whistle that signaled, He’s moving” (127). Once Hock realises his predicament, he abandons all plans of developing the decaying village and concentrates his energy on planning his escape. In any case, it does not appear as if anyone in the village is interested in its development, except, perhaps, Gala and Zizi. Everyone else wants something personal to survive on, and not what would be of benefit to the entire community (113). This is capitalism carried to extreme misapplications.

The poetic rejection of Western help is made apparent when Hock is stranded in the village of children. All the children want Hock to die in place of all the promises he makes about providing them with light, books and medicine, amongst other amenities. It does appear that it is only Africa that can help herself through sound leadership. But this is exactly what is lacking in the Lower River. In the village of children, the Lord-of-the-flies plot is reenacted but in the African milieu. This particular place is where all the children whose parents died of HIV/AIDS and who themselves are infected with the virus are abandoned. These unfortunate children survive only at the mercy of the donor agencies which occasionally come in helicopters and throw down relief packages. It is a setting where cacophonous anarchy reign. As one of the head boys tells Hock, there is no government in the village of children and the children are depicted as unruly and beast-like (178). No segment of Malawian society is spared of this debilitating poverty; and the more vulnerable the group, the more debilitating the poverty situation, which, as depicted by Theroux, affects women and children most.

According to UN-1993/95 reports quoted by Chisinga (2002:28), rural poverty predominates in Malawi and stands at 60 per cent. Poverty is in this context seen as “a condition characterised by serious deprivation of basic needs in terms of food, water, health, shelter, education, and a lack of means and opportunities to meet minimum nutritional requirements (Chisinga, 2002: 28). This is the nature of poverty that Theroux recreates in *The Lower River*, where the people of Malabo resort to eating

cassava because there is no other source of food. Gala tells Hock: “There is little rice. There is no millet. Not much flour. We are eating cassava most of the time” (303). The water Gala offers Hock is shown to be cloudy; an indication that it is not safe for drinking. Hock pretends to drink it by taking the glass to his lips and then keeping it down (307). In the post-independence era, which *The Lower River* is assumed to depict, the Banda regime gave the world an impression that the country’s economy was buoyant. According to Chisinga (2002:27), this macroeconomic index “contrasted sharply with the severity of want and deprivation among the populace”. All this is linked to the incompetent and irresponsible Malawian leadership. The research in the next section examines the postmodernist features in *The Lower River*.

Postmodernist Features in *The Lower River*

Theroux’s gothic-like narrative is laced with postmodernist features that help sharpen the literary import of the message that it sends across. In fact, *The Lower River* compares with Mapanje’s *And Crocodiles Are Hungry at Night* in its deployment of postmodern irony and paradox. The use of humour to punctuate a gory tale and the inadvertent trappings of the postmodern zeitgeist in the narrative structure are some of the characteristics that *The Lower River* shares with *And Crocodiles Are Hungry at Night*. For instance, it is ominously paradoxical the statement Deena makes when she gives Hock a smart phone for his birthday. She tells him: “It’s going to change your life” (3) and that is exactly what happens because from the moment Hock accepts the phone, a series of events begins in his life that finally takes him back to Malawi. It is a postmodernist situation that the sophisticated technology of the smart phone is what reveals all the secrets affairs Hock has had with other women over the years, so that his wife comes to possess in her palm all the dark secrets of her husband’s past escapades with other ladies. This is a case of an individual’s historicity *palimpsestically* retrieved by a technology.

From this moment forward, Hock’s life does not remain the same. Divorce is imminent and then he runs to Malawi to escape from it all. Hock is shocked by this postmodern re-memory which Theroux describes thus: “He [Hock] did not know that a phone, even a high-tech computer-like device like that, could access so many messages, ones that he’d sent and received, twelve months of them, including ones that he’d deleted . . . that

he'd believed, having dragged them to the trash-basket icon, were gone forever" (10). It is Teja's python that serves as a symbol of Africa's re-memory for Hock. His encounter with the snake brings back all the fond memories of his three-year stay in the Lower River, and given that he has nothing to keep him in Boston, he decides to leave for Malawi. In the use of the expression ". . . the period of Teja and the snake", Theroux shows his sense of historical consciousness at the level of high magnification which Harré and Moghaddam (2006) refer to. An important postmodern situation is recorded at the moment when Hock falls ill and turns out to be an object of spectacle and diversion to the villagers who humour him with the title "chief" in artificial and pretentious sympathy and obeisance (273). When the tragic becomes the spectacular – a form of diversion – postmodernism sets in. To Hock, this is a nightmare, but to the detached villagers, Hock has become a source entertainment. Hock becomes art.

There are instances of humorous and ironic depiction of events in the work. Hock elicits laughter from the hotel driver when he tells him that he was to be dropped at Nsanje. Apparently, the driver knows that Nsanje is no destination. At the same instance, it is ironic and even paradoxical that while Hock prefers the local dialect, the driver, whose Western sartorial dress sense is obvious, prefers to answer Hock in English (63). This is an indication that some Malawians do not value their culture, a salient point in the justification of the long-drawn decolonisation project in Africa, meant to teach Africans the importance of having faith and deriving pride from their own culture. It is also ironic that against the background of extreme poverty in Malabo, Manyenga tells Hock: "We are having everything," when actually they have nothing (94). Indeed, Manyenga is a metaphor for Malawian leadership of the diabolical blend, and given his dictatorial tendencies, he can also be seen as the Banda incarnate, whose typical characteristic is espousing untruths because they cannot face the stark realities in the milieu they preside over.

Manyenga keeps referring to Hock as a great chief and an important member of the Malabo community while it is necessary to collect his money and valuables. The true situation as Gala reveals to Hock is that he is a stranger and remains so in the Lower River. This is a subtle attack on the assumptions of globalisation and multiculturalism's claims of global citizenship for all, especially in the wake of Trumpism, Brexistism, re-

nationalism and white supremacist campaigns. Hock, himself, soon finds out that Manyenga's seemingly honorary epithet "was no more than an elaborate insult" (268). Even at the point where Manyenga orders the kidnapping of Hock, he still refers to him as "Our great chief" (313). Manyenga is noted for his crocodile smile which serves purposes beyond the conventional utility of smiling. For one, Manyenga smiles when he has something to hide (296). He wears this smile while assuring Hock to go with the young leaders from the village of children, when actually arrangements have been made to exchange Hock for food items.

Humour is central to the foregrounding of the postmodern texture of the novel. The overbearing attitude of Hock's wife gradually makes the marriage unbearable; so he dreads every situation that makes him and Deena stay together for a whole day or a longer time. For instance, he hates Sundays when he has to stay at home. He also dislikes vacations but since he "had never met anyone who hated vacations, he kept this feeling to himself" (12). It is humorous that Manyenga's senior wife refers to the cloth-gift from Hock as "America" (77). The metonymic reference serves to show how American products are valued in Malawi. Theroux also makes fun of Gala's realisation of Hock's first name as "Alice" instead of "Ellis" (101). When Gala appeals to God as her last resort in the crisis that involves Zizi's rape and Hock's being held hostage, Hock is shown to be filled with despair because Gala's words sound like surrender (308). It is humorous and ironic that the mention of God could highlight an individual's helplessness and vulnerability. However, this is the reality because in human affairs, God is usually appealed to when all human machinations have proved abortive.

The Lower River is rich in literary or textual allusions, which are salient postmodernist traits. Theroux alludes to and even parodies a line in Coleridge's "Kubla Khan" when he writes about the postmodernist regression of Malawi in an age of advanced human civilisation: "They had changed, regressed drastically in their small subterranean hole in the world through which a river ran as dark as any classical myth" (92). In Coleridge's poem, the lines are: "In Xanadu did Kubla Khan/A stately pleasure dome decree/where Alph, the sacred river, ran/Through caverns measureless to man" (Abrams, 1962:1555).

Another instance of textual or historical allusion is depicted in the analogy in which Doctor Bob compares an incident in Leo Tolstoy's life to the marriage issues Hock and Deena are having. Bob tells Hock and Deena in one of their therapy sessions that after Tolstoy's wife poked into his private letters, Tolstoy ran away from home and died in a railway station (12). This statement is at once intertextual and prophetic because it foreshadows what Hock would pass through when he eventually escapes to Malawi. Hock equally finds in Snowden's foolishness the fool's license that jesters in Shakespeare's plays possess. There is the use of postmodern euphemism when Gala, instead of telling Hock directly that Zizi was raped, rather says that "she was beaten . . . and worse" (300); "and worse" being a phrase of huge import; it sums up the overall tragedy any maiden in Malabo could go through because the loss of virginity outside marriage and outside the community-sanctioned rites is a life-altering and destiny-changing event.

The attempts to appropriate existing traditions for personal and political gains by the Banda leadership and even the successive ones are recreated in Theroux's *The Lower River*. Manyenga, who is perceived as a Banda metaphor in this novel, is shown to be exploiting the Malabo indigenous traditions for personal and political gains. Manyenga tells Hock that he has arranged a ceremony to crown Hock chief. However, he intends the ceremony to achieve the purpose of ritualising Hock's kidnap and eventual removal from Malabo through the sea to the village of children. Thus, he tells Hock: ". . . we must have a proper ceremony, with dancers and drummers and music. The old blind man Wellington can play the *mbira* with his fingers. And then the voyage in a canoe. The float on the river" (308). There is an existing tradition of how chiefs are crowned, but in the context just quoted, Manyenga appropriates this tradition to evil ends as "the float on the river" is to serve as a safe way of taking Hock away by sea.

The *gulewamkula* dance to which Manyenga invites Hock on the night he is to be removed from the island is supposed to be secret and not to be observed by an outsider. Still Manyenga is willing to abuse this tradition because of his personal interests. However, to bypass this traditional exclusion clause, he finds a convenient way of referring to Hock as "our chief" and a member of the Malabo community, when he

knows in the deep recesses of his mind that Hock remains an outsider, the “Other”, in Malabo.

Hock eventually is rescued from Malabo, thanks to the efforts made by Zizi whom Hock later takes along with him to America. The reified and repositioned postcolonial significance of this event is that Malawi is left to develop on its own, but Hock’s leaving with Zizi signifies a new form of relationship between Africa and the West; or perhaps it shows that Africa-West relationship will continue but not in the form of interferences and insecure charity. What, however, is missing in the novel is when the people of the Lower River would come to the realisation that with people like Manyenga at the leadership helm of the community, they would never emerge from the darkness of poverty and underdevelopment that currently engulfs them. The next chapter of the study critiques the men/women and adults/children components of the reordered binaries of the postcolonial theory as depicted in Zeleza’s *Smouldering Charcoal*, Mnthali’s *Yoranivyoto* and Chimombo’s *Hyena Wears Darkness*.

CHAPTER FOUR
THE TRAGIC DANCE OF MALAWIAN WOMEN AND CHILDREN
IN ZELEZA’S *SMOULDERING CHARCOAL*, MNTHALI’S
YORANIVYOTO* AND CHIMOMBO’S *HYENA WEARS DARKNESS

“ . . . She sobbed hysterically. The elders had cheated her again in the choice of men. All her life it was the elders deciding for her. She had been shunted around from one initiation to another, as if she was a ritual object. No one asked her what her wishes were . . . ” (40).

- Atupele in Chimombo’s *The Hyena Wears Darkness*

Leadership and the Oppressed Posture of Women and Children in *Smouldering Charcoal*

Malawian women’s dancing is, in this chapter, metaphorically extended to account for all the various forms of subjugation that women and children are made to suffer due to the insensitivity of the leadership as portrayed in Zeleza’s *Smouldering Charcoal*, Mnthali’s *Yoranivyoto* and Chimombo’s *The Hyena Wears Darkness*. Thus, this chapter critiques the men-women and adults-children’s components of the rearranged binaries of the postcolonial theory, which queries African leadership for the oppressed state of women and children on the continent. Gyasi (2004:183) sees *Smouldering Charcoal* as “the story of two families from different social classes. The life of Mchere, the uneducated bakery worker, his no-nonsense wife Nambe, and their starving children is a compelling story that lays bare the corruption and tyranny that bedevil many African countries.”

Zeleza’s novel is set in Banda’s Malawi, and it renders a vivid account of the inhumanity perpetrated by the leadership against the followership. The leadership is, in the novel, represented by the Malawian Congress Party (MCP) leaders, both males and females, all the privileged members of the Malawian society and Banda, who is known in the novel as the Leader. The followership characters are Mchere, Nambe, Bota, Chola, Catherine, Lucy and Biti, among others. Among the followership, the female

characters targeted in the analysis are Nambe, Mchere's wife; Catherine, Chola's fiancée and Biti, a self-reliant seamstress. In discoursing the adults-children component of the framework of the research, this study takes certain liberties by extending the referent for children to include the youths or the young minds of Malawi since, in an expanded perspective, every African is a son or daughter of Africa. In *Smouldering Charcoal*, children's characters subjected to analysis are Ntolo, Mchere's eldest son, Mchere, through his childhood experiences; Ntolo's siblings and friends, among others.

The novel's repositioned postcolonialist argument can be deduced from the conversation between Denga and Chola, who are depicted discussing the neocolonial state of Banda's Malawi. Chola expresses his dissatisfaction with the way the former colonial masters continue to exploit Africa and, in his response, Denga decries the delay in the nationalisation of Malawian firms. When Chola rejects nationalisation as the solution to Malawi's neocolonial situation, Denga states that the solution can start with "getting rid of the expatriates" (23), to which Chola replies by saying that "some of our people are even worse than the expatriates" (23). Denga vigorously protests Chola's position by pointing to the long colonial history of exploitation, but Chola is also armed with the history of Africa's self-exploitation orchestrated by its greedy leaders. He tells Denga:

You have missed the point. I thought there were also throughout the ages notorious Africans who sold their people into slavery, or collaborated with the invaders to subjugate our people. And do you really mean to tell me that the ordinary factory worker who toils from eight in the morning to five in the afternoon, or the peasant who tills the ground from sunrise to sunset, is poor because he or she doesn't work hard enough? (23).

Thus, what has emerged from the duo's conversation is how African leaders and elites have teamed up with the western economic and cultural predators to oppress the common peoples of Africa, and, in this case, Malawi. As earlier stated in the study, at every point in the evolution of Africa's history – precolonial, colonial, neocolonial and postcolonial, there have always been elements among the ranks of African leadership willing to sell out their country and their countrymen in a quest to satisfy their avarice. A repositioned postcolonialist analysis of *Smouldering Charcoal*, therefore, is aimed at depicting how it is the Malawian leadership's fault that the women and children in the

novel languish in the most inhuman conditions. Perhaps, what should be hinted at this point in the analysis is how the experiences of all the followership, males and females, are connected. This is looked at especially through the view that they all suffer the consequences of evil leadership together. For instance, the effect of the frustration Mchere experiences at the bakery where he works reverberates in his family as his wife and children go hungry, he assaults his wife in an apparent transfer of aggression, his family is eventually evicted from the house because he cannot afford the rent, amongst other issues.

Perhaps, a glimpse into Mchere's childhood could explain the buildup of events that results in his current circumstances. In this backward glance into Mchere's history, one begins to understand Mchere's cowardly disposition towards the strike being planned at the bakery. Through Mchere's childhood story, it becomes apparent that the current repression, detention and politically motivated killings in contemporary Malawi is a repetition of history, except that the first one was perpetrated by colonial agents, while the ongoing dictatorship is carried out by Malawians in privileged positions of leadership against fellow Malawians. In his time, Mchere's father was one of the leaders who protested the imposition of the Rhodesia-Nyasaland Federation. His stance was met with the naked brutality and violence of the colonial state agents, all of which Mchere witnessed. Mchere recounts this experience to his colleague, Bota, when he says,

The *askari* became wild and hit my father with the butt of his gun and cried for help from his colleagues. Three of them rushed in, punched my father viciously and then handcuffed him and pulled him out of the house. His shirt was torn to pieces and hung loose over his bruised shoulders. Blood was dripping from his nose, and his trousers were almost falling to the ground. . . (65, 66).

Mchere's father eventually died in prison, with the direct effect being the withdrawal of Mchere from school since he could no longer afford to pay his fees and there was no one to help him out. Instead of going to school, Mchere becomes a child labourer in a bid to support the family. Thus, Mchere's current poverty is not unconnected, first of all, with his limited education, which results in low wages, and, secondly, with the

repressive regime that collaborates with the neocolonialists to shortchange the poor workers.

Mchere's story communicates the fact that childhood experiences can shape later adult character, life and fortunes, which could have transgenerational ramifications. For one, Mchere having witnessed his father "beaten, his clothes and face bashed in blood, handcuffed, powerless and unable to defend himself" (66) is now an emasculated male adult as can be inferred from his castrated look after telling Bota his story. Indeed, most of the males classed under followership in the novel are emasculated, thereby making possible a discourse whereby these men could be analysed as nominal men since societal forces, as calibrated by the regime, have rendered them impotent.

What claims can Mchere lay to his manhood within the African conception of the term when it is Biti, the woman next door, who comes to feed his hungry children after he has returned from work with empty hands? The act itself questions and threatens his manhood, as he watches helplessly as a woman, not even his wife, is the one who brings food for his children. The plight of Mchere's children and the gravity of their famished state are vividly depicted by Zeleza when he writes: "The children looked up when they saw their father but did not stop crying. They had seen his empty hands. They were all herded together in the only dry part of the kitchen, semi-naked, thin little creatures, shivering, with swollen and hollow eyes, and throats that issued strange sounds from their hungry stomachs" (67).

Mchere can be blamed for squandering the two Kwachas he got from Bota on drinks and Lucy the prostitute at the bar without remembering that he has hungry children at home. However, that he is an emasculated male means that Mchere's sense of responsibility is seriously blunted. His frustrated self escapes into alcohol and women in order to find temporary solace, acceptance, ephemeral wholeness or meaning. Mchere's deep sense of satisfaction endures until it is shattered by the reality – the faces of his hungry children crying for food. This is a serious psychological situation because, in response, Mchere wants to beat up the children, and when Nambe, his pregnant wife, intervenes, "He was overcome with fury and he hit her several times until she reeled to the floor and fell" (67, 68). This is a clear case of transferred

aggression. A purely psychoanalytic interpretation of Mchere's action is that being unable to confront the Leader (Banda) and the Management of the bakery, the real source of his sorrows for obvious reasons, he takes it out on his wife and children.

There then lies the plight of the average African (Malawian) woman. She is portrayed as a punching bag, the object on which the effeminate and the frustrated powers exercise their strength. Her life is subjected to various manipulations by the political and economic forces in society. For the woman in Malawi, this political manipulation of feminine existence begins right from childhood, passes through all the stations of gender oppression and culminates in dancing for the state – the national celebration of gender oppression. Mkamanga (2000) and Gilman (2004) have written extensively on women's dancing in Malawi and how women fared generally under the Banda regime. The oppression of Malawian women through compulsory dancing at Party events and other ritualised duties happened against the background of Banda priding himself as the number one protector of Malawian women, having taken on the title of Nkhoswe Number One. In *Smouldering Charcoal*, Zeleza depicts the oppressed posturing of women at Party events, especially during the inauguration of a beer factory. Zeleza writes that, "children and old women sitting in the open were clearly overcome by the heat" (32), a statement that corroborates Gilman's (2009) observation that the dancing women sat on the floor during Party events in the Banda era.

Their sitting position indicates symbolically the place of Malawian women and children during Banda's dictatorship and the fact that they hardly follow the proceedings of the events shows that women and children are not carried along in the scheme of things. They are only needed when it is time to dance in honour and praise of Banda. Again, Zeleza writes: "Some women, clearly from the Party, judging from the uniforms they were wearing, stood up and began singing and dancing in praise of the Leader" (33). Granted that dancing is an integral aspect of the Malawian culture and tradition, in the Banda era, however, women's dancing, as well as the other aspects of the Malawian culture, was exploited for political profits and relevance.

There is also enough textual evidence from *Smouldering Charcoal* to corroborate Mkamanga and Gilman's submissions that in the Banda era, women were coerced into

dancing, and that failure to comply could result in dire consequences. These women were also required to attend series of rehearsals on stipulated days and time to ensure a perfect outing. All these play out in *Smouldering Charcoal* when Mrs Gonthi and Mrs Madimba, the Chairman and Deputy of the Women's Brigade, visit Biti, who had got the contract to sew Party uniforms. After chiding Biti for the slow pace of work and expressing dissatisfaction with the quality of her work, Mrs Gonthi, as a follow up to Mrs Madimba's announcement that independence celebrations were close, declares to the women gathering at Biti's house that, "from now on dancing practices will be held twice a week, every Friday and Sunday" (40). Of course, the already subdued women cannot protest because they are well aware of the futility and the damning implications of attempting to do so.

Mrs Gonthi and Mrs Madimba's lording over the women could be explained in terms of the emerging discourse on how the oppression of women has been aided by other women, or perhaps how women, themselves, have helped in encouraging patriarchal marginalisation of other women to thrive (Omvedt, 1986; Bearman and Amrhein, 2015). It should, nevertheless, be understood that both Mrs Gonthi and Mrs Madimba constitute Leadership in the novel and so their disposition towards the women is likely to be patterned after the general leadership framework of the regime. Leadership, in this context, is sexless or genderless.

The much-touted idea that the Banda regime looks out for women and is dedicated to their welfare is called to question when the occasion actually arises for the Party or its representatives to put such lofty ideals into practice. This is what happens in the case of Biti whose labour is exploited by the Party in the sewing of the Njala women's Brigade uniforms. The author states that, "had the dresses been for ordinary customers she [Biti] would have made a lot of money. But since they were Party uniforms she only charged a token sum. It was implicitly understood that that was her small contribution to national development" (40). It is apparent that the Party expects so much commitment from the women but when it comes to the point of rewarding them and making their lives better, the Party plays the sacrifice and patriotism cards. The deception and exploitation of women by the Banda leadership is further revealed in the encounter between Nambe and the Party Chairman when the former goes to seek the latter's help

in conveying her sick son, Ntolo, to the hospital. Nambe is not only shocked by his refusal to help, she is equally taken aback by the swift and sudden manner of the refusal to help. Nambe finds herself thinking:

Hadn't he said at the last meeting that people should feel free to come and see him about their problems? Didn't the Leader himself always say that women were the backbone of society and they must be respected? Isn't that why he enjoyed watching them in their colourful uniforms as they surrendered their maternal hips to the drum beat, and let their waist wriggle with the frenzy of youth? Hadn't Nambe always participated in public functions where Njala women sang, danced and ululated until their throats cracked? (44, 45)

It is to the leadership of the Party that Nambe owes the sudden end to her brewing business which has also plunged the family deeper into poverty and want. It is not as if the Party has any replacement for this business or has provision to employ her, even to compensate her. First, one of the Party officials wants to take advantage of Nambe by threatening that unless she has an affair with him, she will not be allowed to continue the business. When she is finally able to get round that particular hurdle, the government declares a ban on the brewing of the local gin (*kachasu*), citing health risks. Apart from this larger obstacle, while the business lasted, Mchere's emasculated and frustrated self contributed his own fair share in ruining the business. Mchere's problem and how it affects his family are explained by Zeleza thus:

When he married Nambe, Mchere vowed to stop drinking; with a wife he would no longer suffer from boredom, and there would be no need to drink. But he gradually discovered that marriage was not a rose garden. Marriage meant more mouths to feed than his own and he found that difficult. His failure to feed and look after his wife the way he would have liked to, and the way he knew she expected, began to take its toll. He reverted to drinking for solace (72).

Marriage as an institution in the novel fails mostly not only on account of the pressures of the state on husbands and wives, but also because of the misperception of what purpose marriage should serve. It also fails due to unrealistic expectations and outright ignorance that the couple bring into the marriage. Once marriage breaks down, the first line victims are the children that the marriage produced. Mchere goes into marriage with the illusion that it will save him from boredom and abuse of alcohol, when he

should have seen marriage as a commitment to shoulder huge responsibilities. Thus, when the marriage fails to provide the escape he envisaged, all the frustrations and flaws of his pre-marriage life return to haunt him and to impact negatively on his family. This is only aggravated by the poor leadership structures in his society.

From the women's perspective, marriage is a highly valued and invaluable institution. In fact, within the African ontology, marriage is an important identity marker and every woman is expected to pass through it since it is a passport to responsible motherhood; motherhood, itself, being an important aspiration of every woman. However, in a dysfunctional society run by retrogressive leadership ideals which include the appropriation and expropriation of traditional practices for political gains, marriage soon becomes a grave where women's dreams are buried. It does not matter the women's level of education, as long as society holds on to unprogressive ideas and practices, the women's invaluable potentials are bound to remain untapped and their dreams unrealised, as they marry into social and economic oblivion. Zeleza notes this reality when he thinks through Catherine, Chola's girlfriend: "After graduation, most of the women would, of course, eventually sink into the anonymity of marriage, and let the promise of their youth, and the dreams that could have been, die unfulfilled, like drops of water in the desert" (55).

Also, in this state of poverty uncaring leadership, marriage is viewed from the prism of poverty and possible poverty alleviation, whereas the question of compatibility is usually not properly answered. This is the case with the Mchere-Nambe union. Nambe confesses that her marriage to Mchere was arranged and that she neither liked nor disliked him when the marriage took place (7). The narrator notes that Nambe's parents saw their daughter's marriage as an opportunity to reduce the cost of food in the household, as well as a possible source of income (7). McNelsh (2016:par9) reports that "A 2012 United Nations survey found that more than half of Malawi's girls were married before the age of 15," making Malawi rank 8th out of 20 countries believed to have the highest rates of child-marriages in the world. In addition to this, Malawi is also considered to be among the poorest countries in the world and ranks 160 out of 182 nations. It is no wonder, then, that among the rural poor, marriage is seen as a means to alleviate poverty and a method of reducing living cost in large families. This

is the situation that Nambe finds herself because in a large household such as her father's, not much opportunity is available to her for self-development other than marriage.

Of course, this is to be expected in a society where male-child preference continues to be the norm. In most African societies, including Malawi, the boy and the girl child are socialised differently and are treated differently. Kamlongera (2007:84) points out that "In Malawi the birth of a boy is much more celebrated than that of a girl." In the course of bringing up the children, the boys are given more liberties compared to the girls. Masculinity, for instance, is associated with aggressive physical attributes while femininity is described to be gentle and enduring. This appears to be what plays out in the relations between the boys and the girls in Nambe's household. While taking their lunch, Titani, one of the girls, complains to Nambe that Ntolo eats too fast. Nambe, in response, orders her to shut up, an action which pleases and reinforces the boys' attitude to jeer at their sisters (9). After the meal, it is the girls who clear the dishes and wash the plates, yet Ntolo and Uta still find this moment of labour convenient to throw mud at them. Upon protesting their multiple tasks shortly after Nambe and Grandma ask them to pick up more plates and get the mats, respectively, the girls are ordered to do as they are told. The foregoing dramatisation implies that the girl child is socialised to be silent recipient and implementer of orders. Going by how childhood tends to shape adult character, it is possible, from the examples above, to envision these girls' relationship with their spouses later in life.

In a bid to prove his manhood to his peers who mock him for gathering the smallest quantity of fruits, Ntolo attempts to climb another mango tree and falls down fatally in his moment of greatest triumph and sustains injuries that would later prove mortal. The narrator describes this sad incident thus: ". . . the sky was torn by a piercing cry. Ntolo came crashing to the ground. A swarm of bees had blanketed his head and formed a dark umbrella over the area" (13). It is the fear of being laughed at by their sisters if they return home from the fruit with empty bags that motivates the boys to proceed with the hunt despite coming in contact with a dangerous reptile (12). More than anything, the greatest motivation for their fruit hunt is, of course, their hungry stomach, which they hope to pacify with the fruits from the forest.

Western education which should help in enlightening these children on life, human and gender relationships is shown to be almost nonexistent in Banda's Malawi. Where it does exist, it is not properly run. For instance, the author notes that "many of the children did not attend school. There were those whose parents simply couldn't afford the school fees. Others like Ntolo were out of school at present because their teacher at Njala Primary School had been dismissed and a new one had not yet been found to replace him" (9). This is descriptive of a situation where bad politics and policies affect the education of the children in the novel. What kind of future is the leadership preparing the children for if there are only three teachers in a school populated by hundreds of children?

An examination of Lucy's character reveals that she is not a prostitute by a conscious choice, but rather she is conditioned by a buildup of events from her childhood, one of which is her inability to go to school due to paucity of funds (102). With no qualification, coupled with negative societal socialisation, Lucy sees the commercialisation of herself as the only means of earning a living. Indeed, childhood is destiny! Childhood is what separates Nambe, the unfortunate and impoverished housewife, from the female medical doctor that she admires at the hospital (93). It is obvious that the lady is a medical doctor because in her childhood she must have been given proper education and socialisation. The importance of education even for the girl child is seen in Catherine's characterisation. She is able to avoid most of the pitfalls in her society due to her having been empowered educationally, despite suffering under the Banda dictatorship like everyone else in the novel. Nambe is able to establish how evil leadership affects the family in the words she says to Ntolo when he enquires about the reason his father, Mchere, was taken to prison along with the other bakery workers. She tells him: "You see, your father and his friends work at the bakery the whole day. They produce many loaves of bread each day. But they are not paid enough to buy that bread for us to eat" (132, 133). Ntolo's death the following morning is not unconnected with the failed medical system run by the regime, which at one point makes Nambe wonder if the hospital was a place one goes to be cured or to acquire diseases (92).

As Gyasi (2004) strongly suggests, Zeleza, in *Smouldering Charcoal* creates strong female characters which parallel those created by Ousmane in *God's Bits of Wood*. This is in keeping with the tenets of African feminism which depicts the African woman as naturally strong and one whose role complements that of the man, and not necessarily the man's inferior (Davies, 2007:563). However, in the face of overarching dictatorship, it is difficult for these women to play their invaluable roles in the lives of their men and their family members. The analysis of *Smouldering charcoal* shows that leadership impacts negatively on the women and children. It is instructive, therefore, to note that whatever happens at the level of leadership has chain reactions that reach to the lowest societal strata. What is very inspiring in this novel is how, at one point, the followership come(s) together to resist evil leadership in society. The women, as well as the men, choose to stand and struggle together in a bid to survive evil leadership. Again, there are both existential and textual survivals in this novel, just like in Mapanje's *And Crocodiles Are Hungry at Night*.

To survive dictatorship, however, the women need to resist dictatorship not only physically, but also mentally. Resistance exists both at the personal and collective levels in the novel. For instance, Catherine is depicted resisting the improper sexual overtures from her lecturer, Dr Bakha (161). She also resists her attacker who wants to sexually assault her in a bid to take what the narrator describes as “. . . the very essence of her being” (144). Nambe also resists giving in to the sexual advances by the Party officials who want her to buy protection or permission for her brewing business with sex. When she is deceived and coerced into having a romantic relationship with Gwape, a local Youth Militia leader and it results in a strain in her relationship with Mchere when he eventually comes out of prison, Nambe's reaction and resistance to it is burning down Gwape's house, including all the persons in it (171).

When Njala women learn that their men have been arrested for threatening to embark on strike in pressing home their demands for better pay and working conditions, they come together to protest their unlawful detention. First, they refuse to go for the state dancing rehearsals. Second, they confront the prison officials and demand to be allowed to see their men (135, 137). The narrator states that, “The traditional dance rehearsals were supposed to be held that afternoon. But the wives of the arrested

strikers decided not to participate in the rehearsals until they know what had happened to their husbands” (135). There is also textual evidence to corroborate existing literature on the fact that at every point in the Africans’ struggle for emancipation, women have always stood side by side with their men (Acholonu, 1995; Uko, 2017). Indeed, the confrontation between Njala women and the prison officials echoes the previous face off women had with the colonial masters as reminisced by Uko (2001). The narrator captures this confrontation thus: “The guards clutched their guns as if in anticipation for action. The women looked terrified, but did not move. Those with children on their backs tightened the cloths holding them. The situation was charged” (138).

It is interesting to observe that in the face of threats and intimidation, these men and women put aside their personal differences and form an alliance and a collective front to demand some easement from their oppressors, who, of course, are the leaders of postcolonial Malawi. That these women fight with their children tied to their backs is also indicative of the fact that men, women and children are involved in the struggle for liberation. It is expected that the regime would attempt to break this resistance through intimidations, threats, bullying and outrageous brutality. But it is to the credit of these women and the other characters that they stand together to resist oppression. The arrest and eventual torture of their husbands are aimed at to breaking these women’s resolve. Chola’s resistance is marked by his resignation from the newspaper he is writing for because he cannot write against his conscience and also by his joining the Movement – an underground organisation dedicated to the dethronement of the Banda leadership and the enthronement of democracy in Malawi (116, 158). In response, the regime arrests Chola as he plans to leave the country and throws him into prison where he is cruelly tortured, sodomised and eventually murdered.

The height of Banda’s inhumanity and cruelty is dramatised in the description of the torturing techniques deployed on Chola:

Chola was told to strip naked. A stove of hot charcoal was brought. He was told to sit on it. Chola resisted. They grabbed him and put him there. He screamed as his buttocks felt the heat. After he was removed

he saw one of the guards taking out a hot nail from the stove. It was pierced through his penis. Chola shrieked with terror (157).

Eventually, Chola is murdered but even in death he becomes an immortal hero because he leaves behind a manuscript in the custody of Mchere. It should be noted that *Smouldering Charcoal* is a product of Chola's manuscript. Interestingly, Chola refers to his manuscript as his testament to posterity. Again, the existence of this manuscript, its survival and eventual mass reproduction means that it can contest with the Banda ideology of darkness and death, which is built on distortion of history and facts. This is the final defeat of tyranny. The unique creation process of this novel qualifies it to be termed a postmodern novel in the sense that Chola's manuscript is posthumously worked on by Catherine and Mchere when they escape the Banda regime and meet in exile. Catherine notes in the epilogue of the work: "You can see for yourself that Chola's manuscript was quite long. We have felt free to add experiences pertinent to the story. I do not think Chola would have minded that" (181). The existence of Chola's manuscript denotes textual survival, which, to this research, is the best form of survival.

For protesting their men's arrest and refusing to attend dance rehearsals, the women are severely punished by the Establishment. They are rounded up by the Youth Militia and herded to the football field where they meet the stern and hate-filled gazes of Mrs Gonthi and the Party Chairman (147). They are later expelled from Njala Town and forced to return to their different villages with nothing, except curses and abuses, after having had their houses looted (164). It is in this process that Biti loses her sewing machine and her means of livelihood. However, she is portrayed as a very determined woman who is able to start her life all over again, this time through farming, a profession determined for her by the rural setting in which she now finds herself. It is also in this process that Nambe returns to the village as a single mother who struggles to cater not only for her children, but also for her aged husband's mother. This sudden shift in existential posturing weakens her position of power and inevitably makes it possible for her to be taken advantage of by Gwape, the Youth Militia leader, after a series of harassments. Hence, it could be posited that evil leadership hurts the nation through the creation of dysfunctional family structures and highly neurotic nuclear family characterisation. Interrogating and repositioning this leadership, it is hoped, will

ensure a better narrative for the entire spectrum of the Malawian society. Interestingly enough, this is what most of the progressive followership characters are engaged in throughout the evolution of the novel's episodic plot structure.

Postmodernist features in *Smouldering Charcoal*

From all indications, Zeleza's *Smouldering Charcoal* can be read as a postmodern prose text. One important feature considered to be postmodern about the novel is its collective authorship. Chola wrote the manuscript before his death. Then Catherine and Mchere improve upon it, making other necessary insertions that qualify them to share authorship with Chola. According to Kirby (2006) and Baya (2013), partial or multiple authorship, audience autonomy and reader authorship constitute some of the marks of post-postmodernism. In other words, unconventional authorship and nontraditional production or creation processes are some of the many marks of the post-postmodern novel. Apart from authorship uniqueness, the work also has other postmodernist features such as symbolism, humour, paradox, irony, dream/reality dichotomy, literature within literature and vulgarity, among others. It should be noted that the author deploys these features consciously or unconsciously to reinforce the import of the messages he intends to send across to the reader. Their interpretation in this critique is equally meant to sharpen the edge of the thesis's postmodernist claims.

Mchere's obsession with the rat in the novel could be analysed as a postmodern symbolism. The rat, itself, can be said to represent the leadership of the Malawian society. Throughout the novel, the rat is a major source of frustration, discomfort, distraction and anger for Mchere. According to him, the rat has been a source of anguish in his life and so he has to kill it if he must find peace (3). In fact, the first authorial expression as the novel opens is about the rat and how it has woken Mchere from sleep. Mchere's annoyance and the way and manner he goes about exterminating the rat is very symptomatic and psychoanalytically worrisome. The elusive characteristics of the rat makes Mchere's situation more frustrating and pitiable. Yet, it is possible to see that Mchere's anger is misplaced and that he has merely reduced the Banda leadership to the troublesome rat in his homestead, instead of confronting the dictator head-on. However, if the rat is to be viewed as Banda, then it is indicative of how a few elites in society could hold the followership and the majority to ransom,

especially when that majority fails to find strength in order to come together to resist the few elites. Mchere's confrontation with the rat correlates with his eventual collision with the forces of the Malawian authorities. It is while in prison that Mchere is finally able to kill the rat, though of course, it is not the one in his house. It is instructive that Mchere proceeds to kill the rat in spite of the opposition by the prison guard. The writer records Mchere's final triumph over the political rat thus: "He stamped on the blanket and saw blood oozing out of it. He removed the blanket and lifted the dead rat with the tips of his fingers. There was a strange expression on his face" (153). The killing of the rat is equally symbolic because it depicts Mchere's triumph over the evil regime in Malawi. He is eventually able to go into exile in a neighbouring country, perhaps, Zambia, where he alongside Nambe, Catherine and Ndetero, works with other members of the Movement to overthrow the dictatorship in Malawi. The use of the rat drama as the opening scene in the novel parallels Richard Wright's *Native son*, which opens with the family of Bigger Thomas battling with a fear-instilling rat in a poverty-infested apartment (Wright, 1940:1).

While Ntolo's death earlier in the novel symbolises an aborted future for the Malawian society because its leadership has refused to put in place structures that make for the growth of its children and youths (133), the birth of a baby while Mchere is in prison symbolises hope even in the face of despair and uncertainty (166). That Nambe has a miscarriage with the Gwape pregnancy does not only help in the resolution of what otherwise would have been a complicated plot structure, it also helps in removing the strain in the relationship between Nambe and Mchere. The couple can then look forward to a better future with hope, clarity of vision and relative tranquility of mind. Again, the marriage between Catherine and Ndetero and its being blessed with a baby-girl, Mtsogolo, is symbolic in the sense that it heralds a new life and new beginning for Catherine and her people. It also signifies hope for the future of the long traumatised nation.

Apart from symbolism, the novel abounds in the deployment of dark humour, which is a postmodernist technique of narrating a tragic tale because according to Dano (2013), dark humour makes the audiences or the readers to laugh at hopeless situations (274). At Biti's, when the community of women holds court and gossip about men and their

oppressive tendencies towards women, a story is told of how a man deceived a lady that he would marry her, when in fact he was already a married man. It is hilarious when one of the women says that “it’s silly to believe everything a man says” (36) and another woman, concurring with the former, says that, “. . . men are liars” and that “that’s how they are made” (36). The humour elicited by these women’s talks is grounded not only in their hasty generalisations about the menfolk but also in their stereotyping of men. It should be noted that this occurs at the initial stage of the novel when the two sexes are yet to come to the point of appreciating the benefits and power of complementarity which African feminism advocates. Without this understanding, it is possible that most of these women see their relationship with men as a necessary evil which must be endured for as long as it is possible. Some of these women liken men to toys, especially with reference to those ones who engage in extramarital affairs and other forms of deceptive behaviour. One of the women says: “They are all the same as far as I am concerned. It doesn’t matter what they say to you, men are men. They think we are born to serve them” (37).

The gender gap is wide at this point in the novel because the men and the women are yet to understand one another, thus instead of seeing their role as complementary, they perceive their relationship with men hierarchically – in terms of masters and servants. It is no wonder then when one elderly woman asserts that women are always being used by men, not loved (38). Indeed, this expression exemplifies dark humour because though it is said in a hilarious context, it is very sadly true for the Malawian gender situation, going by the foregoing analysis. Even the idea of sisterhood seems to be missing at this point in the plot because these women still fight among themselves over men, instead of bonding together. At the peak of Mchere’s frustration, having been refused assistance from all the sources he could possibly imagine, the idea of begging comes to him unconsciously and in no time, he finds himself posturing as a beggar on the roadside. The moment Mchere realises what existence has reduced him to, he soliloquises thus: “Lord, beggars were rugged and thin and they smelled. Their hair was permanently unkempt, knotted together like thick threads of sisal under which lice grew and multiplied. Their bodies were hides of dirt and peeling skin, virtually corpses, carcasses harbouring broken spirits” (98).

The dark humour in Mchere's exclamation is located in its attempt to deny his current situation or the difficulty of reconciling himself to reality. He knows that going by every indication, he is not supposed to be a beggar. For one, he is not disabled in any way. Also, he is healthy, he has a job and he is mentally and physically fit. He is only a beggar due to circumstances. The leadership of his country, through insensitivity, inhumanity and outrageous callousness and disregard for the welfare of its people, has reduced him to a beggarly individual. However, in a country where nearly everyone is poor, how much can the beggar realise? It is indeed a lamentable situation, but it is that which elicits laughter; hence dark humour.

Another humorous scene in *Smouldering Charcoal* is when Chola is narrating to Mchere, Bota and the other inmates how he was arrested by the state agents and taken to prison. It is hilarious that the state agents in their stark illiteracy do not recognise which books should be considered subversive or rebellious, as they seized a book on agriculture just because the title reads: *The Green Revolution and its Fruits*. When it is obvious that they want to take Chola away, he asks if he could have his bath, and their humorous response is: "Do you think we are taking you to a cocktail party?" (122). Chola is rather taken to a "high school" where he is taught life lessons on how not to oppose his leaders (19). High school is a sick euphemism for Malawian torture centres called prisons. The researcher perceives such lexical creativity to be magically realistic, alongside such words as "accidentalised" which was invented in the Banda era, because their euphemistic texture deepens the ominous and the deadly eerie reference associated with the terms.

The researcher, in addition, also observes the deployment of postmodern vulgarity in the novel under consideration. An instance is when Lucy chides Mchere for visiting her only when he has erotic needs. In her words, ". . . so you only came here to sleep with me not to talk to me, is that it? You don't see me, do you, you only see my thing, and after you have used it, even that becomes useless until your next urge and you come running here again. . ." (103). It should be noted that this statement is made at the initial stage of the gendered dialogue between Mchere and Lucy. Eventually, the travails these pairs of characters go through will bond them together in a common struggle against tyranny. This fits into the major assumptions of African feminism which theorises that

the African woman is oppressed on account of her race, class and gender, among other structures of oppression. Thus, it is necessary for her and the man to team up to defeat these overarching oppressive structures before settling down to negotiate on matters or issues that affect them as men and women at home and in society (Sotunsa, 2009). Related to this is the naturalistic depiction of sordid realities in the novel.

Two instances would suffice. First is when the author describes a slummy part of Njala where the poorest of the poor live. The authorial narrative voice states that “on both sides of the road were shacks built of mud, grass, metal sheets, cardboard, and anything else that could provide temporary permanence. The rickety structures harboured disjointed human forms, not people, surrounded by mad dogs, rats and inhuman stench” (16). Further description of the scene reeks of violence, death and inhuman suffering for unfortunate men, women and children because of the criminality that the neighbourhood is noted for. The stark realities in Malawi under Banda are compressed into the following words:

There old men and women died in their sleep, or were stabbed to death, thanks to a few coins they had hidden in the ground; young girls prematurely bore children in quick succession, children who would neither know their fathers nor the shape of a blackboard, indeed children who would be walking advertisements of bloated stomach and the merciless fury of petty diseases; and youths perfected their martial arts and graduated into the world of terror and violence (16).

As the quote indicates, most of the Malawian followership lived in Hobbesian conditions in the Banda days. Under such conditions, women and children suffer the most. Another scene depicting the depth of human suffering in Njala is in the General Casualty of the city’s hospital, where Ntolo is battling for his life, supported by Mchere, after falling down a mango tree earlier in the day. The sordid and the sodden state of the hospital shows that the Malawian health care system is in ruins, even as access to medical care for children is very problematic. The author writes that “the queue was so long that Mchere had little hope of being attended to before dawn. . . The whole place was droned with cacophonous cries of children and the coughing and spitting of old people. Occasionally, the air was spoiled by farting” (88). No wonder Nambe is confused about the essence of the hospital as she endlessly and impatiently

waits to be attended to. To her, the hospital does not look a place where the sick come to get healing, but rather a place to contract diseases.

Postmodernism is also manifested in the extra-realistic depiction of events in works of arts (Iggers, 2009). In *Smouldering Charcoal*, this element is noted when Chola sets out to write a book “about himself, about Dambo, Mchere, their families, about many other people, their inadequacies and frustrations, their lives and struggles to break out of the monstrous concentration camp that is independent Africa” (106). Postmodernist art is not, therefore, pretentious about being far removed from human reality. Instead, it aspires to portray real-life situations involving real-life people. It is an art that is committed to the preservation of human history, just as *Smouldering Charcoal* does through its depiction of life. Art within art or literature within literature as a postmodernist feature is also present in the primary text. This is seen in *Smouldering Charcoal* when Catherine reminisces on the staging of the subtly subversive play of Inde Ndetero, a fictional character that can be read in extra-literary terms as Jack Mapanje. Catherine points out that the play slips through the Censorship Board’s dragnet due to its technique of historicification, meaning that the setting of the play is in the remote past but challenges the reader to align the events with contemporary actions. What, however, the Censorship Board agents do not realise is the timeless and universal nature of literature.

This is so because even though *The Great Famine* is set in the mid-seventeenth century at the court of King Kadzidzi, it is an inuendo for the Banda leadership, owing to a number of striking correlates between the central character of the play and the contemporary dictator. It is a story that depicts the corruption of power and the dangers of absolute power. The non-consummation of the marriage between King Kadzidzi and his wife, Tafa, parallels the well-established fact that Banda never married the official hostess of his government, Cecilia Kadzamira. The wanton killings that occur in the play are aimed at silencing anyone perceived to hold the secret that could destroy the King’s reputation. This is the same way Banda is reported to have hounded his perceived political enemies, especially those armed with the early personal and societal history of Banda (85, 86).

The observed allusions to other literary texts constitute an important postmodernist feature observed in *Smouldering Charcoal*. For instance, Ntolo's action of trying to impress his peers by climbing the tallest mango tree in order to pluck more of the fruits references the behaviour of Okonkwo in Achebe's (1958) *Things Fall Apart* whose actions are mostly motivated by the fear of being thought weak. Like Okonkwo, Ntolo's show of bravery or manliness ends tragically. The search conducted in Chola's house in the course of his arrest references the experience of Mapanje recorded in *And Crocodiles Are Hungry at Night*. In each case, the state agents first of all make for the bookshelves where they hope to find subversive literature to use in justifying the arrest (*Smouldering Charcoal*, 121).

Mapanje's account of the poisonous prison food is corroborated by Zeleza in *Smouldering charcoal*. His description of the food also tallies with that of Mapanje: "Chola was hungry, but when he saw the food his appetite turned to revulsion. It was *ngaiwa* which was so badly cooked that it was full of lumps and was as hard as stone. The contents in the bowl of relish were even more hideous. It was some meshy fish which looked like worms" (123). The portrayal of Banda in *Smouldering Charcoal* resembles the Ruler in Ngugi wa Thiong'O's *Wizard of the Crow*. This is seen especially in the folk story about a greedy chief which Grandmother relates to Nambe's children. The chief is known for snatching food from his people without remorse. The end only comes when the chief's stomach becomes "inflated like a balloon until it bursts" (132) just like the Ruler's stomach is over inflated in *Wizard of the Crow* (Ngugi, 2007:469, 470).

Nambe and Mchere's revenge against Gwape and the manner in which they leave the village after setting Gwape's house on fire echo the events in Okpewho's (1976:241) *The Last Duty*, except that both successfully escape to continue their relationship in exile. The recurrent nature of human actions, especially in their archetypal frames, also implies the repetitive or cyclic nature/quality of human history. This can mostly be checked when the human actors or players are conscious of their actions and the times: past, present and a possible future. In essence, the critic, the followership and the leadership need to be armed with history, or perhaps, possess critical sensitivity towards the zeitgeist of their milieu. Unfortunately, and as can be deduced from the

analysis so far, history is often a site of various contestations and claims by all the power structures and bases. History, therefore, can become a discursive phenomenon subject to appropriation, and sometimes even misappropriation by the powerful members of society in order to maintain their dignified positions and to sustain the status quo.

In New Historicism, however, all these historical perspectives are placed side by side and subjected to scrutiny so that a balanced interpretation could be achieved. It is by examining the narratives of both the privileged and the less privileged that the objectivity of history can be established. This research, a reified and repositioned postcolonialist study of postmodernist works, interrogates the items right of each binary structure against the dominance of the items left of the binary structure. This is in keeping with the assumption of New Historicism which states that the narratives of the “Other” are equally important, indeed very important, in unravelling the truth in discursive discourses.

Leadership Intrigues and Power Play: the Woman in-between in Mnthali’s *Yoranivyoto*

Felix Mnthali’s *Yoranivyoto* dramatises the historicity of the Banda era from the perspectives of the various actors and witnesses of the events. It is a unique epistolary novel as the major characters or players-cum-witnesses address their accounts to a female character whose full name is Anniversary Yoranivyoto Mganthira nee Mchosamantha. She is a towering character who is at the centre of the tragic saga narrated in the novel. All the male characters who write to her do so because they, in one way or another, have fallen in love with her and wish to impress her with their accounts of the events leading to the detention, torture and eventual murder of Anniversary’s only love, Wavisinga, by the despotic regime of Dr Hastings Kamuzu Banda in the hope that they could convince Anniversary to look favourably at their romantic confessions. However, Anniversary can only love one man, whether he is dead or alive; and this is the heroic dimension of her character. Her ability to resist the love advances and harassment from the powerful and antagonistic patriarchal forces in the Banda regime to remain faithful to Wavisinga even after his demise makes her a heroine.

The reordered postcolonialist argument of the novel is expressed by Anniversary when she writes: “I am not gloating over victories. Neither am I too happy with the fact that Malawians were dropping sacks full of Malawians into the River Shire” (53). It is this gruesome killing of Malawian peoples by their leadership that raises the reified postcolonial issues in the work. Another instance where the repositioned postcolonial argument is directly expressed in the work is in Chinangwa’s naturalistic description of the Malawian prison situation which he likens to the human condition in the days of slavery. He writes: “During parades I often wondered whether a slave market at which wealthy white ladies ogled African manhood under the guise of looking for durable merchandise could have been as humiliating as what we were now undergoing” (62). Chinangwa finds parallels between the Malawian postcolonial historical situation with that of colonial slavery based on the incident where the female Young Pioneer member prods the naked inmates’ manhood with a stick with the words; “Is this the thing with which you curse our undying Leader?” (62). It should be noted that the activities of the Young Pioneer movement members is a case of young people allowing themselves to be brainwashed, radicalised and used by the leadership as a source of sorrow to the followership.

The significance of the novel within the context of this study is its capacity to accommodate not only the voices of the leadership, but also the voices of the followership. It is when both the privileged and the less privileged voices have been put together that one can come to an insightful and objective interpretation of events and their truth-value in the historical period under scholarly scrutiny. As the novel opens, Anniversary is described as “an attractive, intelligent woman clinging to the memory of someone who had already passed into eternity” (4). From this point on, it is obvious that Anniversary is an enigmatic personality; one that is very intriguing that the narrator, an academic, wishes to research into her past in order to come to terms with “why she [Anniversary] had not decided to begin life anew with one of the many intelligent and eligible bachelors in Botswana or Malawi?” (4). Unlike some of the women portrayed in Zeleza’s *Smouldering Charcoal*, Anniversary is highly educated, an academic with a doctorate degree. She is aware of the oppressed position of women in the Malawi of her time and she is well determined and well positioned to fight and resist being used by men. She is also determined to resist being bullied by the political

overlords figures in privileged positions in her society. Again, it needs to be emphasised that it is Anniversary's resistance that marks her heroism in a society where women are perceived as perennial preys of men because their positions are so weakened their vulnerability appears beyond redemption. Yet, it is from the story, or in the epistles which form her story, that the reader learns the impact of dictatorship on society, including women and children.

In Wavisinga's letters to Anniversary, he depicts the various abuses by the despotic leadership of Banda against the followership. The highpoints of these abuses are usually unlawful imprisonment, torture and death. Perhaps, what is most disheartening about these extra-judicial detentions and murders is the absurd nature of the perceived offences by the victims. For instance, it is reported by Wavisinga that Andumile Andwanje-Gama would not have been jailed if he had not refused to marry the niece and secret mistress of the Minister of State for security, Honourable Dindi Jegede (17). It would then appear that in Banda's Malawi, if anyone so much as refuses to massage the bloated ego of the regime and its members in any way, such a person is marked for detention and death. The novel reveals that in Banda's Malawi, women are treated as chattels to be used and then passed round by the powerful members of the regime. Refusing sexual favours even from highly-placed women in the party is a grave indiscretion that can result in imprisonment. When a man wants to marry one of the girlfriends of the Party leaders, he must first of all ask for permission from the bride's master, who would then give his blessings and permission thus: "It is alright. Please go ahead and marry this good lady. When we need her again we will call her!" (18). The implication of this statement is that even after marriage, the former girlfriends of Party leaders could still be drafted to please their former masters whenever the occasion arises.

In her own remembrances, Anniversary, who also constitutes the novel's authorship, writes of her love for Wavisinga, the events that brought them together, the jealousies of the Party leadership because of her steadfast and uncompromising love for Wavisinga, harassment, persecution, detention and torture of Wavisinga, how she married him while still in detention when it was obvious he was dying, his eventual death and the events that followed, including her present decision not to marry again. In

Anniversary's writings, which are actually inspired by Wavisinga, she recalls asking him why he loves Malawi and the Malawian peoples but hates the leaders and the elites. Wavising's response highlights what is wrong about Malawi and its leadership. He says, "I love this country and all its people. . . Love may be blind but it thrives on genuine criticism and passionate anger at what is evil, meretricious, devious, tribalistic, egoistic, autocratic, tyrannical, self-aggrandising, narrowly ambitious, tainted with greed, deceitful, dirty and plainly dishonest" (38). The evil effect of dictatorship on women and children, and indeed the entire family, is seen when Anniversary has a miscarriage that results in the loss of two babies when Wavisinga is detained a second time (45). Anniversary calls it "a painful and bitter miscarriage", which she only copes with through scribblings that have formed part of this novel. The symbolism of the failed pregnancy is not lost on the critic. It is interpreted as ushering in a bleak systemic discontinuity in societal progression. If children are representations of the future of society, the miscarriage indicates that with the Banda leadership, Malawi has no future because its policies and ideologies antagonise any futuristic aspirations.

Pursuant to the multiple perspectives of the novel, the fourth contributor to the novel is a highly-placed Party leader, Chiswaswa Matanjoka, Minister of National Integration and Mass Mobilisation. His letter to Anniversary is dated October 17, 1987. In this writing, Chiswaswa tries to justify some of the policies and activities of the Banda regime, including the brutality, detention and death. Mr Matanjoka begins from the personal to the collective, justifying his present unalloyed loyalty to the Leader of the Party. His reason is that Banda took him from "the depths of obscurity to the limelight" he now enjoys (50). This statement is indicative of how blind loyalty and political favours could elevate mediocre people overnight, especially in African politics. One can easily sift out the contradictions in his statements against the stark realities in Banda's Malawi. For instance, he states that, "in tribulations, in peace, and in anything whatsoever we Malawians will always be behind our Leader" (50). He is actually speaking for himself and the inner circle of the Party leadership because the truth is that the Malawian people are desirous of freedom from the evil grips of the Banda dictatorship. Again, his statement about the prosperity experienced in Banda's Malawi stands in stark contrast to the extreme poverty and hunger that ravaged the nation at the time.

The prosperity that Chiswaswa refers to is only experienced by the privileged members of the Party. Chiswaswa's shameless hypocrisy, lies and sycophancy could be seen in the following statement: "We have known only days of plenty because of the dynamic and wise leadership of our Hero. He plans everything and takes care of everything. Where would we have been without him? Where, indeed, would all those who have taken to attacking him in and outside this country have been without his dynamic and foresighted, farsighted, all-encompassing, all-embracing wise [sic] and gifted leadership? Tell me Anniversary, where would they be? Is it any wonder that I am prepared to lay my life for him?" (50). The characteristic impunity associated with the member of the Malawian regime is reflected in Chiswaswa's words, especially when he boasts that he has met, wooed and bedded many women, even going as far as quoting Shakespeare's "all is fair in love and war" to justify his unconventional romance strategies. The fact that Chiswaswa also appeals to history to justify him confirms one of the theses of this thesis, which is that history is a site of various contesting claims dominated by the attempts by the privileged to perpetrate textual survival. As far as Chiswaswa is concerned, the current detention and torture of dissents is necessary so as to forestall the recurrence of the 1964 Cabinet crisis. Thus, it could be asserted that Banda's high-handedness is motivated by fear and insecurity. According to Chiswaswa, "power cannot stand being told that it is idiotic. . ." which could easily be interpreted to mean that dictatorial governments have deep-seated aversion to criticism (52).

That childhood character predicts adult behaviour is shown in Wavisinga's refusal to sign a form of apology to the colonial authorities during his secondary school days because of his conviction that he did not do anything wrong (55). He does this even though he knows it would mean him being dismissed from school. This unbending attribute of Wavisinga is carried over into adulthood and is contained in the statement about him made by Chiswaswa, who writes to Anniversary thus: "Your late husband would not believe me when I indirectly tried to warn him against his abrasiveness and his haughty and remote manner even in the presence of members of the central committee of the ruling Party. Most of his friends would put on an arse-licking and inane bonhomie just to smooth the social interaction expected of them" (54). These were the same set of friends, it should be noted, who obediently signed the apology form back in their childhood days to avoid dismissal from school.

The next letter addressed to Anniversary in the novel is from Chinangwa Chamawa Michosamantha, Anniversary's uncle. Against the background of the regime's attempts to distort the Malawian narrative in their favour and paint the followership in an evil hue, Chinangwa's writing acts as a counter discourse. It aims at straightening the account of the Malawian people's suffering and eventual resistance to tyranny. Chinangwa writes from prison and it is very likely that he may pass on soon, him being a very old man. This explains why, towards the end of the letter, he urges Anniversary to make sure that his account of history endures by preaching it whenever she goes (76). Chinangwa's letter is significant because the best legacy that elders can bequeath the younger generation is the undiluted historical accounts of their society. History is a weapon which could be deployed to tackle many societal challenges, including tyranny and its re-occurrence. Chinangwa's discourse and deep historical probing attempt to get to the root of the contemporary Malawian political crisis. It seeks to answer the Achebe query: where did the rain begin to beat us? In his account, Chinangwa reveals that dictatorship is a creation of followership and that it does not occur in a day. In his words: "I often ask myself where exactly we first went wrong. Was it at Nkhata Bay in 1958, at Nkhota Kota in 1960 or was it in Lilongwe in 1966 when the position of head of government was merged with that of head of state?" (60). Each of the dates mentioned marks a significant political milestone in the history of Malawi, with Dr Hastings Kamuzu Banda at the epicentre of it all. It was at Nkhata Bay in 1958 that Banda was welcomed back from abroad with pomp and ceremony to lead the liberation movement of the Malawian people.

According to McCracken (2012:374), it was at the Nkhotakota Conference in 1960 that Banda was declared Life President of the Malawian Congress Party (MCP). Mnthali writes through Chinangwa that "the worse was to come in 1970 when a British judge administered to the hero some oath of continuance in office. The leader was becoming president for life and we cheered wildly" (61). From the foregoing, history is perceived as a series of chained seemingly harmless events with huge temporal ramifications, implications and consequences. The realisation that each time an individual or a group of individuals are taking a decision or an action, they are in effect creating history in the present time is instructive in realising the need for both leadership and followership

to watch closely the occurrences in their milieu. This should be done even when the occurrences seem insignificant.

The necessity for resistance against retrogressive leadership is expressed in the letter addressed to Anniversary by Pelindaba Pachipembo, who breaks the tragic news of the passing away of Anniversary's uncle, Chinangwa. He writes of his vision for Malawi, a democratic Malawi, "where people can differ and agree to differ even on fundamental issues and still respect each other and talk and share jokes with each other" which is nothing like against the contemporary Malawi of his time (79). Though his letter is not dated, one can place it as having been written towards the end of the regime, say 1991 or 1992 because of the agitations that are envisaged at the end of the letter. Pachipembo writes that "This approaching end of the twentieth century is proving to be hectic for our country. Who would have thought even as late as the beginning of this year that we too would stand up and say, 'Enough is enough?' " (81). It is a historical fact as reported by Mitchell (2002) that in 1992, the seven bishops of Malawi wrote what has come to be referred to as the pastoral letter which was read in all Roman Catholic congregations in Malawi. The pastoral letter politely condemned the highhandedness of the Banda regime and appealed for freedom of expression and the protection of other basic human rights (Mitchell, 2002:6). This historic letter fired up the pockets of protests that had been taking place occasionally in Malawi, culminating in mass protests that are reported in Andumile Andwanje-Gama's letter to Anniversary in this novel of competing narratives and perspectives (84). In keeping with the structuralism of natural laws and recompense, the overbearing nature and impunity of the regime is what leads to its end. This is exemplified in the action of the Young Pioneer movement when there is a need to address a chaotic situation in the prison where Andumile and others are kept. By murdering a prisoner who attempts to pacify the bloodthirsty policemen, the Young Pioneer movement crosses the line. The result is that the prisoners fight back and, as the author puts it, ". . . all hell broke loose" (84). It is to the people's unity and resistance that Malawi owes her eventual liberation from the Banda dictatorship.

The significance of the narrative lies in the fact that everything revolves around Yoraniyoto, who is counted upon to act as the custodian of history by both friends and

foes. Indeed, the place of the woman in the preservation of human history in the period of crisis has been well established by the story of Yoranivyoto. She is, indeed, a female epitomisation of the biblical salt of the earth.

Postmodernist Features in *Yoranivyoto*

Apart from the postmodernist structural texture of the novel, which has already been commented on, there are other features of postmodernism in the novel. For instance, there is literary allusion or the act of a text calling out other texts. This is seen as the narrator writes about the strange love scene he saw at the children's playground, prompting him to ask: "What might Ayi Kwei Armah or Zakes Mda have made of this? Were those lovers the beautiful ones who had finally decided to be born?" (2). In his letter to Anniversary, Wavisinga refers to the prison as "a national luxury resort" where inmates like Anniversary's uncle suffer all forms/kinds of maladies, including malaria, hypertension and dysentery (14). This is a classic example of sad irony – one of the postmodernist features in the text. Irony is also seen in Chiswaswa's statement that Malawi has not suffered like other African countries, attributing the prosperity to the wise leadership of Dr Kamuzu Banda (50). It is equally ironic that Malawi is depicted in the work as a place to run from, when it should actually be a home (72). The tragic story told in *Yoranivyoto* is infused with instances of humour or humorous occurrences. For instance, Anniversary recalls Wavisinga's childhood days when fights were begun by the two opponents kicking "a couple of small sandy mounds representing the breasts of . . . [their] opponent's mother" (34), an act which symbolises a grave insult that could only be settled through a fight. This example is also a case of postmodern vulgarity or obscenity. This is equally seen in Anniversary's description of the ominous lovemaking with Wavisinga shortly before he was arrested by the state agents for refusing to surrender his wife to be used by the leadership in satisfying their insatiable lust. Anniversary writes: "Why do I remember the love-making of that day above that of all other days? Was it because I cried several times? It was good. It was ecstatic. Wonders will never cease. Wavisinga also cried and told me he had lost all hope of ever finding happiness again this side of paradise" (33).

It is a sad humour that couples have to seek the permission of powerful members of the state in order to marry ladies previously involved with them (17). Yet, this laughable

ritual could be the cause of an individual's lifetime regrets if not followed to the letter. It is equally funny that the state agents sent to arrest Wavisinga are depicted as "holding on to innocent record while writers like Marx and Engels were left smiling down Wavisinga's shelves" (52). This is an apparent dramatisation of crass illiteracy. The veiled threat issued by Chiswaswa at the end of his correspondence with Anniversary is hilarious especially from its creative, euphemistic and cruel politeness. Chiswaswa tells Anniversary: "As usual I am fully informed about everyone's progress over there [exile]. So far I have heard nothing but praise about all of you. Keep up the good work. Remember too our people's saying: '*kwanu nkwanu, mthengo mudalaka njoka*' East or west, home is best. The wilderness tends to attract snakes" (58).

The Malawian regime under Banda was known to have informants even among the exiles in different countries who report to the regime the activities of the individuals and groups. This is what Chiswaswa is boasting about in his threat. His statement that home is best is clearly ironic in the case of Malawi and it is this ironic element that contributes to the hilarious nature of the piece. What he means by the wilderness attracting snakes is that exile is dangerous. Banda was also known to have sent assassins after those who fled the country for political reasons.

It is interesting to note that most of these humorous instances occur at the dire points of human conditions. For instance, when Chinangwa is abducted for being called a Lion by fellow union members after a major labour victory over their employers, he is put in a sack and ferried to the Lower Shire, which is a geographic metaphor for death and sudden disappearance. When Chinangwa asks for permission to urinate, he is told: "Piss in your sack, you trade-union trash! . . . There is only one Lion in this country! Who told you to take our Leader's titles?" (64). When nemesis finally catches up with Chiswaswa and he is bundled off to prison, Andumile reports to Anniversary that Chiswaswa tells everyone in prison that his stay will be very short as he is only there for a few days to study the prison conditions. It is very hilarious the way the inmates poke fun at Chiswaswa in dramatisation of his pride and foolishness, especially in his demanding to be treated with respect and dignity in prison as if he is still in power. When he demands an apology from inmates for mocking his inanity, the narrator reports that the prisoners surround him and begin to mime some of the well-known

Malawian women's dances, punctuating them with the following words: "Sorry, Master! Sorry, Master! Your people are asking you to forgive them because to you belongs power and glory forever and ever. Even in this prison! Yees!" (83).

References to other literary works and extant literary icons abound in the work, which also constitute a postmodernist feature in the text. For instance, Chiswaswa quotes Shakespeare's famous words in one of his plays, though Chiswaswa uses the expression to perpetrate and justify his sycophancy for Banda and at the same time to chastise Anniversary for rejecting his love advances. According to him, the wise leadership of Banda shields the Malawian people from war while Anniversary's exile prevents him from loving her" (51). Also, the argument used by the regime in justifying arbitrary arrest and detention of people in Mapanje's *And Crocodiles Are Hungry at Night* is alluded to, if not repeated, in *Yoranivyoto*. Chiswaswa tells Anniversary that, "Since the initial split in 1964 [referring to the infamous Cabinet Crisis] it has been necessary to keep some people under lock and key for their own good and for the good of the country" (51).

Yoranivyoto's form is typical of the kind of art produced under a dictatorship owing to the extreme censorship and the repressive tendencies of the regime. It is a novel created through the gathering of correspondences sent from different men to the woman in their lives, including the woman's own remembrances. Dictatorship does not allow the fictionalisation of reality through the conventional mode of writing. This, perhaps, explains the unorthodox forms of the novels so far analysed. That the letters are addressed to a woman is indicative of her vital role in the preservation and nurturing of not only life, but also the history, tradition and values of society. That Wavisinga refers to Anniversary as young, healthy, intelligent and strong (19) attests to her attractive personality and diplomatic skills that make both friends and foes confide in her. Anniversary is the *shero* of the novel because she does not give in to threats and intimidations from the leadership and neither does she betray the trust that her husband, Wavisinga, has in her. Despite her hurts, pains, sorrow and constant suffering as a result of the arrest, torture and murder of her husband, the miscarriages of her pregnancies and the consequent immeasurable losses of the babies that could have served as comfort and the future of her world and society, Anniversary is strong enough

to resist the regime even in exile. She is an example of how women should resist oppression in the male-dominated political sphere.

The analysis so far has revealed that Malawian women are strong and blessed with talents and potentials that could make their nation great. Still, the fact remains that in Malawi an oppressive structure indirectly sanctioned by a passive leadership means that the potentialities of these women will remain untapped and instead these women are made to suffer untold hardship and pains alongside their children. It is the thesis of this study that society stands to gain so much when women are fully integrated into its structures by dismantling those practices and behaviours that are harmful to the wellbeing of the woman. However, entrenched cultural practices aided by the leadership's complacency and outright hypocrisy have reinforced the oppressed structures that subordinate the Malawian women. Among the scholars who have written on the subordination of Malawian women through the institutionalisation of traditional practices are Gilman (2004), Kamlongera (2007), Semu (2002) and Hayes (2013). Mkamanga (2000), for instance, notes that in Banda's Malawi, "women were dehumanised in various ways like dancing in the heaviest tropical storms with their babies on their backs; or a pregnant woman being asked to buy a party card for her unborn baby!" (15). The irony in all this is that Banda prided himself as being the Number One Protector of Malawian women throughout his reign.

Appropriation of Tradition and the Oppressed Posture of Women and the Girl-child in Chimombo's *Hyena Hears Darkness*

In this research, Malawian women's dancing serves as a metaphor for the continuous rhythmic pattern of existential swaying of Malawian women's body politic to the dictatorial tunes of patriarchy both in the Banda and post-Banda eras. Specifically, this aspect of the research examines how traditional practices such as the *fisi* culture and wife inheritance have aided the spread of HIV/AIDS among the female population in Malawi. In Chimombo's *Hyena Wears Darkness*, a collection of three related short stories, the consequences of risky traditional beliefs and practices in the Age of HIV/AIDS are succinctly captured. The three short stories, "The Widow's Liberation", "The Widow's Revenge" and "The Hyena Wears Darkness" centre around a female character, Atupele, whose husband, Pangapatha, has just died of AIDS. She is required

by custom to perform the *kusudzula*, widow's cleansing, which requires the wife of the deceased to have sex with a chosen male member of the family in the hope that the action will release the widow so that she can marry again (20). The problem, however, is that Pangapatha died of AIDS and, unknown to many except Atupele herself and Sigele, he had infected the wife.

One of the burial rites in the culture of the Malawian peoples is widow's cleansing which involves the deceased man's wife having sex with a close relative of the husband. This act is believed to release the wife from her dead husband so that she can remarry. It falls on Sigele to perform this sacred duty on Atupele since Ndakulapa, the eldest brother to the deceased is not available. Atupele is motivated by Sigele's kindness and generosity towards her before and after her husband's death. Thus, she plans to open up to him about her HIV status and to convince him to deceive the elders that the deed has been done. Unknown to her and while she is away waiting for Sigele to come to her, Ndakulapa shows up and Sigele gratefully and automatically relinquishes the role to him. Upon seeing Ndakulapa, Atupele is overcome with revulsion and hatred for the patriarchal structure of her society. She is determined to have her revenge on the elders for having dictated to her life right from childhood. Her revenge is in allowing Ndakulapa to have a share of the deadly virus by allowing him to have sexual intercourse with her. Perhaps, when Ndakulapa and the elders come to the realisation as to what has befallen them, they will advocate a change of attitude and acquiesce to an alteration on the ways risky cultural practices are carried out in an era plagued by dangerous sexually transmitted diseases and infections.

Hyena Wears Darkness in a number of ways reveals the oppressed position of Malawian women and girls owing to the entrenchment of patriarchy-sanctioned traditional rites that no longer have significance or value in a highly altered postmodernist society. One of these practices which are detrimental to the growth and development of both the women and society is child marriage as reported by McNelsh (2016: Par9). This is Atupele's fate as she gets impregnated by Pangapatha while in secondary school and has to drop out of school as a result. The fact that she barely completes her secondary school before becoming a mother and a wife will seriously affect her economic circumstances, which results in her over-dependence on her

husband. In fact, this is the case in the short story as Atupele has to appeal for external funding for her husband's treatment from friends and relatives, chief of whom is Sigele. At the point when she realises that Pangapatha's death is inevitable, Atupele ingeniously requests her husband to make a will that will leave most of his remaining assets to her so that she can take care of herself and the children. The appeal, apart from indicating Atupele's dependence on her husband for survival, is also informed by the ungodly practices in Malawian society whereby widows are denied access to their late husband's property by the husband's family members.

In her attempt to convince her husband of the wisdom in making a will, Atupele cites an example of her neighbour, Andilandazonse, that “. . . father, uncle, and brothers came in a truck to clear the house and chase her out. She was left with the clothes on her back, a few pots and plates. . .” (32) after her husband's demise. It should be noted that all these happen under the watch of a complacent and dishonest leadership that is known to appropriate traditional beliefs for political gains. The lack of confidence in Malawian leadership is expressed by Pumulani, Uncle Ndamo's wife, who urges her husband not to believe everything the government agents tell him, adding that their village Mutopa is likely to remain the same even after all the promises made by government (49).

The story told in *Hyena Wears Darkness* refers to the four harmful and risky traditional practices implicated in the spread of STDs, including HIV/AIDS in Malawi. These are *kusudzula*, the widow's sexual cleansing; *kuchotsa fumbi*, the deflowering of initiates and *kulowa kufa*, wife inheritance (46). While waiting to be sexually cleansed, Atupele imagines the scenario to be just like the *kuchotsa fumbi*, “the ritual deflowering of nubile girls after their first initiation ceremony”, whereby “the *fisi* or hyena, the deflowerer, came in the night, unannounced. He performed his duties silently and departed anonymously. . .” (34). The implications of such a practice for the growth of the victims and society have been documented by Kamlongera (2007), Munthali and Zulu (2007) and Hayes (2013). In 2006, the BBC reported the story of Eric Aniva, a hyena man, who admitted to having unprotected sex with over 104 underage girls without disclosing his HIV status (Ashton, 2016: Par1). Apart from the spread of life-

threatening diseases, the effect of such practices usually follows the woman all through life and could even have psychological ramifications.

It should be noted that the observation Sigele makes of Atupele about her looking like “. . . the model of a caged womanhood” (23) is symbolic and is representative of the generality of the Malawian womanhood, especially when considered from the perspective of what they have to go through in a male-dominated society from childhood to adulthood. Atupele is aware of the ominous truth that she will soon follow her husband to the grave, which explains her sudden hysterical cry: “My husband! Who is going to take care of the children?” (28) This tragic rhetorical query reveals the implication of the whole drama on the children and the future generation of the Malawian society.

Kamlongera’s (2007) depiction of the Malawian male as being socialised to be sexually aggressive and the female as passive is reflected in the implied relationship between the late Pangapatha and Atupele. Despite claiming all through life to loving his wife, Pangapatha secretly had extra-marital affairs that resulted in his contracting the AIDS virus and then infects his wife in the process without even the courtesy of informing her. It is this betrayal coupled with the elders’ dictatorial tendencies and insensitivity that prompt Atupele’s decision to spread the virus to Ndakulapa. According to her, “If the husband whom I love killed me in this way, then I shouldn’t have a conscience returning the unwanted gift back to the family that gave it to me in the first place” (41). Though Atupele’s logic is faulty and her action criminal in the light of existing laws, her bitterness is understandable. The sexual aggressiveness and recklessness noted among Malawian males is reflected in the risky lifestyle of The Terrible Trio’s slogan: drinks, dances and dames (21). This is where the significance of the song chanted at Pangapatha’s funeral hits Sigele: “How come/All your friends are dead/But you’re still around/How come?” (11). Sigele is still alive because of the positive choices he has made as against the risky and reckless behaviour of his friends.

One of the attitudes that aid the spread of HIV/AIDS in Malawi is the calculated silence or conspiracy of silence by all the parties, including the victims and even the doctors, in terms of not acknowledging the existence of the disease; preferring rather to call the

disease by other names. The narrator states, “Dr Mitsitsi had not wanted to say it outright. The speaker at the funeral who had given Pangapatha’s profile had also been vague about the causes of death” (23). It is apparent from textual evidence that Pangapatha knew that he had AIDS but refused to acknowledge it. The fear of coming to terms with his condition is what brings about the sense of denial by Pangapatha which is seen in his “running around from clinic to clinic to traditional medicine men covering half the country” (37). Ndakulapa also fails to inform his wife, Nansani, of his HIV status; instead he shouts and harasses her into silence when she enquires of how his journey to the burial went. After her husband has spoken harshly to her, the narrator notes that “Nansani fled. A doorless wooden frame separated her from her husband’s wrath. She sat on the mat beside the single bed that was the only furniture. She cowered in the dark, wondering what was coming next” (53). Silence and silencing constitute the many oppressed posturing of Malawian women.

It is reported in the text that in dealing with the infection, most people prefer going to the native doctors or traditional healers to consulting medical doctors in government-approved clinics (55). This is the decision of Ndakulapa after realising that having sex with Atupele must have got him infected with the deadly virus. The piece of advice given to him by Atsalaachaje, the medicine man, reinforces the widely held traditional beliefs among the ill-informed Malawian population on the effective cure for AIDS. He tells Ndakulapa: “You must sleep with your own daughter or niece. They have to be yours, of course, preferably virgins, too” (55) in order to be cured of AIDS.

It is heartwarming that despite the bleak HIV situation in the story, a campaign is ongoing to educate the people on the dreaded disease and the dangers involved in engaging in high-risk behaviour. This is substantiated in the words of Ndamo who is one of the leaders of the committee selected to partner with government in bringing enlightenment and development to the community. Towards the end of the plot, there appears to be a gradual shift of attitude and positions concerning the issues raised in the work. Everyone soon realises the need to rethink some of the old traditions in the light of the changing times. The modification of the customs becomes inevitable. But Uncle Ndamo first finds himself in a postmodern dilemma as the following words of his reveal: “Here we are, wallowing between what the ancestors taught us to revere and

what the tribe has to do to survive. Half of me says: do what is right by your forefathers. The other half says: do what is right by your people, the ancestors will understand” (51).

In the end, however, a second look at the whole traditional practices reveals, in the words of Ndakulapa, that they have been anchored on man’s greed, lust and covetousness (64). It is reported that in 2015 the Mutharika-led administration passed a law raising the minimum age of marriage for Malawian girls from 15 to 18 years, thus, checking the spate of child marriages in Malawi. In ordering the arrest and prosecution of Eric Aniva, the rogue hyena man who infected over 100 girls with the AIDS virus, the President of Malawi, Mutharika, condemned the hyena custom, stating that it has no place in contemporary Malawi. It is hoped that if more leadership figures raise their voice against these dangerous traditional practices, the Malawian society will experience a dramatic reduction in the rate of HIV infections. The action of the elders in *Hyena Wears Darkness* is very instructive in this regard because they all finally realise the need to modify the existing tradition to take into consideration the emerging realities in contemporary society (62, 63). The analysis so far has shown how leadership determines the totality of life and conditions in Banda’s Malawi. In the chapter that follows, the research undertakes the critique of the historicity detained in Chimombo’s *The wrath of napolo* and Gibson’s *Mother of Malawi* from the perspectives of the reordered binaries postcolonialism, postmodernism and post-Bandaism.

CHAPTER FIVE

POSTCOLONIALISM, POSTMODERNISM AND POST-BANDAISM: A DISCURSIVE INTERROGATION OF LEADERSHIP HISTORICITY IN CHIMOMBO'S *THE WRATH OF NAPOLO* AND GIBSON'S *MOTHER OF MALAWI*

“Indeed, many contemporary African, Latin American, Caribbean and Asian cultures, while profoundly effected by colonisation, are not necessarily preoccupied with their erstwhile contact with Europe.”

- Anne McClintock

The Wrath of Napolo and Leadership Historicity in Post-Banda Malawi

In this penultimate chapter, this research attempts a discursive critique of the historicity in Chimombo's *The Wrath of Napolo* and Gibson's *Mother of Malawi* through the analytical lenses of the reordered binaries of postcolonialism and postmodernism, as contextualised in the post-Banda Malawi. Previous chapters of the research have dealt mostly with the Banda era of Malawian history, with the attendant dictatorial tendencies being brought to the fore. The analysis of the primary data sources in this chapter will be anchored on the post-Banda era, which has been observed to still retain some of the complexions and habits of the old regime. Post-Bandaism, therefore, denotes the enduring legacies of Banda even in the era of democracy and multiparty system in Malawi. As indicated in the review of related literature in the second chapter of the research, the idea of post-Bandaism is predicated on the fact that even after over thirty-year rule of Banda, certain tendencies typical of his reign continue to haunt Malawian politics and history till date (Khembo, 2004). This has resulted in what has come to be known in Malawian literary criticism as the post-Banda disillusionment, a psychological condition characterised by despair as a result of dashed hopes and expectations following the failures of successive democratic dispensations to live up to their glamour and promises.

Chimombo's *The Wrath of Napolo* philosophises on the imperative of interrogating history in postcolonial societies as a means of pursuing the rediscovery of selfhood both for the individual and society. It is also depicted as a means of achieving reconciliation, the healing of psychological wounds inflicted by centuries of past oppression by hegemonic forces and bringing about justice for all aggrieved parties. The querying of history also has the potentiality of making all human actors to be self-conscious of their contemporary actions since the dynamism of history is predicated on the sum of individual actions in the present time.

Nkhoma's quest to discover the truth about the sinking of the ship, Maravi, fifty years after the disaster is at once symptomatic of most postcolonial societies that have had to battle centuries of historical distortion by imperialist forces, and metaphoric of the contemporary Malawian society still in search of historical wholeness as a way of attaining cerebral wholeness. That colonialism was a history-distorting ideology is reflected in the series of coverups orchestrated by the colonial masters in the sinking of the colonial ship, Maravi. The implication of all this is that postcolonial societies have to re-examine their histories in a bid to correct canonised errors perpetrated by forces sympathetic to imperialism. An interesting discovery as far as Nkhoma's quest in *The Wrath of Napolo* is concerned is how an aspect of a people's history could have far-reaching dimensions and reverberating effects on the other aspects of their life and evolution as a society. This understanding is substantiated when Jere, a university lecturer and historian, says on radio that, "The Maravi story is the history of Mandania [Malawi] in both time and space" (373). The statement underscores the dynamism that characterises history, which in the New Historicist creed, is seen to be alive and constantly interacting with the present and the future. This is how it is possible to see the relevance of Malawian colonial history in postcolonial times.

The admittance of diverse perspectives in the interpretation and re-interpretation of history as noted in the New Historicist framework is equally reflected in the conflicting theses advanced by the different parties who have been interested in explaining the remote and immediate causes for the naval disaster which the plot of the 599-page novel revolves around. In keeping with the tenets of New Historicism, each perspective

deserves the attention and consideration of the critic. If the central character, Nkhoma, a reputable journalist and a detective reporter, must arrive at an objective finding, he must be willing to take all existing angles of the previous reports on the sinking of the ship into consideration. Indeed, Nkhoma himself is aware that history is usually written to hide something. This is what prompts his dexterity and the utilisation of scientific procedures in the course of his investigations. According to him, “I questioned the questions, questioned the answers, and questioned the silences. . .”, and examined “all the facts, from the smallest to the biggest. . .” (251). This is an instance of thick description in the New Historicist framework.

In the course of his journalistic expedition, Nkhoma unearths many interesting issues and facts about Malawi’s colonial and postcolonial history. He encounters forces that are averse to history, believing that history is that which is dead and so should be left buried (66). However, Nkhoma who sees himself metaphorically as a grave digger of Mandania and its past, is of the belief that history is so important to a people’s survival that it has to be constantly examined or re-examined for fresher insights as time goes by and in the light of fresh or contemporary events. Thus, Nkhoma is pitched against the powerful forces affiliated with historio-phobia; and this is where the central conflict in the novel begins to build. From this point onwards, most characters in the novel are judged and classified based on their disposition to history, which also determines on which side the characters belongs to – protagonist or antagonist, hero or villains.

Nkhoma’s methods involve examining existing records on the sinking of the ship, travelling the length and breadth of the country to interview survivors or their relatives, as well as undertaking a participant observation experience on a contemporary ship, The Yandama, to retrace the route of the doomed colonial ship. The intrigues he confronts in the course of going about this assignment constitute the thrilling dimensions of the work’s plot structure. It soon dawns on Nkhoma, his wife and children, that scrutinising history could be a very risky venture and, as Jere, a lecturer friend, warns Nkhoma, “there are a lot of people who wouldn’t want the truth known about the Maravi story” (100). For instance, Nkhoma’s interest in the Maravi story is described by the MASHICO Company secretary, Miss Gonthi, as “opening up old wounds for the public to weep over” (152) and goes on to issue a veiled threat to the

investigative journalist: “It’s a matter of company law. I don’t think the company or our lawyers are going to sit back and watch you reopen the old files!” (185). This is a naked threat to Nkhoma and it is suggestive of how the Establishment dreads history-based probes. The threats are soon followed up with actions as Nkhoma and his family are attacked on three occasions in the course of the research.

Firstly, Nkhoma is warned through the folkloric metaphor of a headless chicken which is dropped in his garage (77), then there is a break-in at night as a second attack, and in the third instance, “the car. . . hit the biggest rock in the middle of the road, which. . . burst the tyre” (246) in an apparently arranged accident, all because, in the words of Miss Gonthe, “it was in the company’s interest to keep its role buried in the wreck or in the files” (465). It is quite interesting that in an attempt to investigate the past, Nkhoma ends up shaking contemporary history which reveals the postcolonial zeitgeist of the post-Banda era. The carryover effects from the Banda regime still hangs precariously over the landscape. These effects are reflected in the experiences of the people, the human relationships in the text and in how the new government treats the populace. When Nkhoma meets Chifundo, the widow of a colleague who died in Banda’s detention, she laments that even in the new dispensation, the family is still ostracised just like they were in the time of Banda (213-215).

The economic circumstances of the people have not altered significantly in the post-Banda era, as people still live in abject poverty. The people’s hope and high expectations have been crushed through a series of disappointments from the new Malawian leadership. The post-Banda disillusionment is evident in Jackson’s description of the Malawians when he declares that “there seems to be no hope in their eyes” (221). The post-Banda Malawi is a corruption-ridden society where democratic principles and rule of law have been perverted by bribery, corruption and abuse of public trust. Although people are no longer detained for speaking out or holding rallies to voice their disapproval of policies, subtle attacks, like the ones Nkhoma and his family are exposed to, show that not much has changed. People are still intimidated and harassed for their political views, associations and beliefs.

The reordered postcolonial argument in the novel is seen in the words of Kamanga during the meeting of the Maravi Action Group (MAG): “. . . it is to the current company, government and law that we address our grievances, the white colonial powers not being with us any longer” (225). This statement justifies the thesis of this study, which is that the colonial narrative in Africa’s postcolonial critique has been taken too far and should be dropped in the light of new realities. The new reality, as Nkhoma tells Chikondi, is that “the economy is in shambles, the politicians are corrupt, the towns crime-ridden and crawling with prostitutes and thugs” (310). The current security situation in Malawi has its antecedent in the Banda regime. The author writes that “those who armed the young pioneers and youth leaguers in the first republic still have their own arsenal”, adding that “meantime, the same young men, unoccupied, are prowling the streets, armed and dangerous” (329). When Thoko, Nkhoma’s wife, calls the police on the night that assailants break into their house, she is told that the police do not have a patrol vehicle (196) and they only show up to ask prying questions long after the criminals had gone.

The thirty-year rule of Banda has implications for the mental constitution of the Malawian peoples. Even in the new dispensation, Banda still has pockets of supporters – people who still believe in the efficacy of his leadership. Nkhoma’s security guard or watchman, Dzikolidaya, is a die-hard supporter of Banda. He remembers Banda as a great man because, according to him, Banda did great things for Malawi. By this, he refers to Banda’s nationalist resistance to colonial rule which culminated in the chasing away of the colonial masters and ensuring that power returned to the people. It is obvious, however, that Dzikolidaya is still holding on to the propagandist views sold to the people by the MCP-led government when Banda was in power. Dzikolidaya also keeps as mementoes the old party cards of the Banda era and prides himself of never missing to buy them. In the presence of Nkhoma and his family, Dzikolidaya re-enacts a song usually sung to deify Banda when he was in power to show that he owned all of Malawi: “Everything is the lion’s/All these trees are the lion’s/All these houses are the lion’s/Even myself, I’m the lion’s” (127).

The notion of post-Bandaism is also exemplified in the action of the little girl Nkhoma and Chikondi encounter on their way to the house of Nkhonjera, the village Headman.

As soon as the girl sees Nkhoma, Chikondi and Moyo, perhaps thinking they are the old Party officials in the Banda era, she quickly stands at attention in her torn school uniform and starts singing the national anthem, marching in military style (524). This is a clear indication that the indoctrination and the propaganda of the Banda era persist in the “New” Malawi, and this is largely due to the fact that it has gone into the mental makeup of the people.

The argument that some aspects of the Banda regime were better than the post-Banda era is reflected in Nkhoma’s words to Chikondi: “Without being partisan, at least the previous government subsidised or controlled prices. The new one doesn’t even pretend to control anything. . .” (312). To Chikondi’s concession that at least in the new dispensation, the people are free to speak out and can even own their political parties, Nkhoma replies in the affirmative but then notes that the people did not have anything concrete to discuss because Muiyaya (Banda) had kept the people so ignorant for so long that the new parties are merely repeating the past (312). The post-Banda Malawi, as described by Nkhoma, is a locale whose inhabitants are either dead or dying emotionally, intellectually starving, politically redundant and merely reactive to crisis and economically crippled by foreign aids and donors (313). Nkhoma, with all his speech-making and writing abilities, refuses to join politics because, as he tells Chikondi, he has seen the futility of politics in Malawi. He dreads the prospects of working with the same people who held powerful positions in the old regime. He says to Chikondi, “Imagine working with the same people you know were signing death warrants for your family and friends and detention notes for your fellow journalists, people who chanted sycophantic songs and wrote eulogies of Kamtsitsi Muiyaya, being your fellow MPs” (345).

Nkhoma’s argument is that if the players remain the same, then no real change should be expected in such a society. It is a society where there is no true justice and reconciliation. In the novel, it is reported that the MCP has been indicted in the Nguluwe trial. This should be a welcome development only that, as Nkhoma intimates to Chikondi, “the current top government officials were in the rank and file of the same party when it [the killing of the MPs] happened” (446). Following the verdict reached by the court in the Nguluwe trial, Banda is reported to have apologised for the past

atrocities committed by the MCP while he was in power. However, the apology is problematic since he, at the same time, claims not to have been aware of the abuse of power, the killings and the torturing of the people during his reign (532). Yet sufficient textual evidence exists, both literary and extra-literary, to attest to the fact that Banda verbally and textually ordered the detention of people perceived to be opposing his government, as well as feeding them to the crocodiles in the Lower Shire River. This underscores the importance of recording and interrogating history as a means of preventing its appropriation, distortion and expropriation by the Bandas of this world. Of course, Banda's apologies should be understood within the context of its political significance. Since the MCP had lost the people's sympathy, it wanted to win back the people's favour by apologising so that they could forget its dark and horrendous past (533).

The electioneering culture in the new dispensation is not different from the one obtained during the days of Banda. The novelist writes that the politicians of the new regime merely perfected the arts. The phenomenon of women's dancing during political rallies continues in the post-Banda Malawi. This is recorded in page 568 of the novel and it corroborates Gilman's (2009) findings on women's dancing in Malawi both in the Banda and in the post-Banda regimes. Though women's dancing has been shown to deepen the oppressed position of women, the "new" politicians argue that women now dance out of their own volition and not through coercion as it was in the old regime (*The Wrath of Napolo*, 568). Just as Thoko, Nkhoma's wife, used to dance for Banda in the previous regime, she is depicted dancing at the Maravi Action Group anniversary. For Susan, Nkhoma's colleague at the Newspaper outfit, this dancing act brings back all the memories of the Banda days and she is depicted crying for things that cannot be put into words (571). Sufficient textual evidence exists to show that Nkhoma, and indeed most Malawian men, still suffer from the effects of their women often leaving home for days on end to dance for Banda.

For Nkhoma, particularly, he is wondering if Thoko had been raped by the Party officials in the dancing camps as was widely reported about women in those days (381). At the moment Nkhoma wonders "if men like him, who run away from their wives into the arms of other women like Susan was not a way of restoring their loss of

manhood during the first republic, reassuring themselves of being in control” (289). It is also within this psychological paradigm that one can deduce that Thoko’s insecurity at the arrival of Chikondi from South Africa to join her husband, Nkhoma, in the participant observation aboard the Yandama arises out of the guilt for what might have transpired in the dancing camps between her and the Party men. She is afraid that she might lose her husband to nemesis.

It does not appear that any aspect of society is spared the post-Banda disillusionment – children, men and women all suffer from the short and long-term consequences of Banda’s thirty-year rule. The suffering cuts across cultural, psychological, economic and political domains, among others. The implication for the analysis is that when bad leadership is accorded ample space, like an untreated wound, it will fester with debilitating consequences on the body. This explains why poor leadership should no longer be condoned in Africa in view of the long-term implications it has for the future of the continent. This is why the postcolonial framework, as reread, positions African leadership as the dominant self in its critical binary structure instead of the West/Western colonialism. This is so that African leadership can be critiqued against the many oppressed structures on the continent.

Postmodernist Features in *The Wrath of Napolo*

The postmodernist features in *The Wrath of Napolo* include dark humour, intertextuality, oxymoronic juxtaposition of ideas and values, progressive absurdism and contradiction. A case of literary intertextuality occurs when Nkhoma compares the post-Banda Malawi to the Banda era. In the new Malawi, Nkhoma says that he has freedom to write his sincere opinion without having to fear for his life. This view is unlike during the reign of Banda when “for years he worked against his conscience for survival” (79) because journalists were handed a format on what and how to report societal events. Nkhoma observes that it got to a point where journalists did not even need to attend the event in order to know what to write because the formula for writing was the same for all the events organised by the government. This corroborates Chola’s experience in Zeleza’s *Smouldering Charcoal* in which he dreads attending government functions because he already knows what will happen there. The mottled skin Nkhoma

notices on his driver's face intertextualises with the HIV/AIDS symptoms/signs Sigele observes on Atupele's wrists in Chimombo's *Hyena Wears Darkness* (*Hyena*, 14).

The keen observations and recollections made by Nkhoma in *The Wrath of Napolo* on the Banda dictatorship are corroborated in other texts. The use of domestic servants, for instance, as informants by the regime also occurs in *Smouldering Charcoal*. Another recollection that is collaborated is the banning of trade unions and the tagging of peaceful demonstrations or any form of activism as rebellious. The old Lady and Widow, Mrs Evans, mentioned to Nkhoma by Christiana Harris fits the description of Annie Chikhwaza as revealed in the narrative contained in *Mother of Malawi*. Indeed, as enthused by Nkhoma "Some widows have led interesting lives" (118), as the life of Annie Chikhwaza shows. The recurrent drought reported in Malawi which Nkhoma informs Chikondi about is also depicted in Theroux's *The Lower River* when Hock describes the Malawian landscape as "chewed, bitten, burned, deforested, and dug up" (*The Lower River*, 64). The Terrible Trio's characterisation illustrated in Chimombo's *Hyena Wears Darkness* is also portrayed in *The Wrath of Napolo* (359). Even the character "Ndakulapa" which appears in *Hyena Wears Darkness* is mentioned in *The Wrath of Napolo* (360). The existence of cross-references among literary works aids in the validation of fictional facts and claims contained in them since these art works serve as witnesses to one another.

Dark humour as a postmodernist device abounds in *The Wrath of Napolo*. It is humorous for Susan to ask Nkhoma if he intends on celebrating his fiftieth birthday by remembering how he swam as a six-month old child, in reaction to Nkhoma linking of his birth anniversary with the sinking of the Maravi. When Nkhoma tells the new watchman, Dzikolidaya, not to address him as *bwana* which means "Master", a title colonial subjects used in revering their superiors, Dzikolidaya insists that even though Nkhoma is not a white man, he lives in a white man's house. However, the narrative voice describes Nkhoma's house as a sprawling mess – an ironic reference that mocks its being associated with white men. The truth is that Dzikolidaya sees Nkhoma as one of the society's elites who had since replaced the white men in the wake of the success of nationalism in Malawi. According to him, since Nkhoma now drives a car, lives in a reserved area, works in an office, has white friends, and speaks the white man's

language, he qualifies to be accorded all the respect due to a white man. This is a neocolonial reading of Africa's social space which no longer serves or holds realistic value within the perception of the current study.

It is funny the way Christiana keeps repeating that she was not expecting anyone during one of Nkhoma's unannounced visits to her house. It is apparent that she is in a difficulty trying to reconcile her European cultural background and visitation codes with those of Malawi. Her having stayed in Malawi with her husband, Harris, for many years has not changed much of their social outlooks, perceptions and biases on the postcolony (159). When Miss Gonthi tells Nkhoma that she cooks for her fiancé because she enjoys cooking, Nkhoma replies that that is what most ladies say at the engagement stage and that after two or three children, the woman usually declares that she is not a house servant. Miss Gonthi retorts that the joy of cooking wears out with time and then it becomes necessary to employ a cook, especially since it was bad for the teeth to cook and maintain an administrative job (161). This is a clear case of creating mirth out of the dilemmas of Africa's postcolonial gender relations. At the meeting of the Maravi Action Group (MAG), the people describe as the explanation that the Maravi has not been salvaged because it lies in the "deepest waters on the lake and engulfed by dangerous cross-currents" as "colonial lies" (228). It is obvious that the forces connected to the Maravi disaster do not want to salvage the ship's wreckage because they do not want their roles in the maritime accident to come to light.

When Nkhoma at the end of the MAG meeting finally decides to ask Susan out, she is baffled as she says: "I thought all your initiative was beaten out of you in the first republic" (232). By this statement, Susan refers to the conscious, unconscious, systematic and psychological emasculation of the Malawian males during the Banda era. In the course of trying to locate survivors of the Maravi disaster in order to interview them to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the ghastly historic incident, Nkhoma encounters many hoaxes – people who had very remote and laughable connections to the Maravi story and yet who were in the forefront of the Maravi activism. One of such people is Watupaso Kamanga, who tells Nkhoma that he is connected to the Maravi disaster because his mother witnessed the sinking of the ship while on her way to the Mission. According to him, "My mother was going to the mission that day. She was almost halfway up the mountain when she saw the Maravi sailing into Kuya Bay. She

saw it tossed this way and that by the *mwera* [a typical Malawian storm]. In the end she couldn't see it anymore. . ." (275). It is a sad commentary on the opportunistic dimensions of the human character, how people could desire to profit from the suffering of others.

As the Maravi investigations begin to strain the relationship between Nkhoma and his wife, Thoko, an argument erupts between the couple. Thoko complains of the participant observation trip Nkhoma undertook with the young Chikondi (apparently, she feels threatened by the closeness of her husband to Chikondi) and the security implications of the whole Maravi project on the family, especially given the series of attacks the family has been exposed to in recent times. In his self defence, Nkhoma says that he has well-meaning intentions for all his actions and that he is only trying to earn a living, to which Thoko replies that he is certainly earning it. This is quite hilarious and qualifies as a dark humour given the dire and precarious situation the couple is in. When Susan warns Nkhoma of appearing in a public place like Kuche Kuche if he is afraid that someone is after his life, Nkhoma replies that he cannot stay cooped in his house all day and that as he is currently working from home (he has just left Nkhani News), people might think he has developed antisocial habits compounded with acute withdrawal symptoms (355).

Another instance where humour is used in the novel is when Nkhoma and his friend, Jere, are discussing the logistics of his forthcoming trip and the politics of power among the three women in Nkhoma's life. When Jere asks if Susan will join the dinner in his house the next day, Nkhoma replies, "Chaufa forbid. She'd get the house on fire and drive my wife up the wall. I'm sure you wouldn't want Thoko, Chiko[ndi], and Susan under the same roof, either" (359). It is equally hilarious the report by Nkhoma at the Malawian airport that "there was no P. A. [public address] system so the hostess came around to announce boarding time" (553). To think that an airport in a post-Banda Malawi might not have a public address system is sad enough but the revelation that one of the pilots is often drunk is not only humorous but tragically so, and speaks volume of the state of aviation safety in postcolonial Malawi.

Postmodern irony is exemplified when the shipping company, the colonial authorities, the captain of the ship and the ship builders are exonerated by the court of any

wrongdoing but rather blame the *mwera* – a mythical Malawian storm – for the tragedy (230). This explains why Kamanga refers to this colonial action as Malawian myth in Western clothing because he cannot understand how any clear-headed high-ranking marine officer could conclude that Napolo [the mythical serpent] sank the ship (230). Indeed, it can be asserted that when the superstitious collides with the logical and the scientific, postmodernism is a result. In the novel, the narrator reports that the Kamba airport site was once a community cemetery, which explains why the site was haunted. The narrator writes that during the construction of the airport, “The whites reported mysterious breakdowns of men and machines assigned to work in the area” (307). The tendency to explain the physical through the spiritual runs through the novel’s plot structure. At one point, Chikondi is prompted to ask Nkhoma how he can “combine the hard facts and no-nonsense pragmatism of an investigative reporter with the so called superstitious mind of the native” (559). Nkhoma’s New Historicist/postmodernist mind believes that no perspective is totally wrong and that it is through working with all the angles of existence that the individual can find wholeness as well as answers to the boggling questions of life.

Nkhoma’s investigation turns out to be very comprehensive and the most effective because he did not abandon any approach in the course of his research. He concludes that though the immediate cause of the historic naval disaster could be attributed to Napolo/*mwera* – the Malawian mythical god and storm, respectively, the remote causes of the sad maritime event include the addition of a first-class deck for the whites in total disregard of the ship’s original structure and the refusal of the captain to heed the warning of the natives not to sail in the storm. Thus, it could be safe to state that racism is a possible contributory cause of the sinking of the Maravi; the addition of a first-class deck was meant to separate the whites as far as possible from the blacks, and the captain could not imagine his orders being countermanded by mere natives.

Another case of postmodern absurdism is seen in Nkhoma being a first-class journalist in the 21st century but one who cannot operate a computer. The narrator reports:

Thoko had asked him why he insisted on using two fingers on the old type-writer or laboriously hand-writing; why he did not buy a PC, if he wanted economy of size and space; why

he wanted to clutter the place with more paper than she brought in from her job [teaching] to add to Fats' contributions. But the thought of learning from scratch how to operate a computer daunted him. He had never mastered touch-typing. Was he too old to change, or just afraid of the new-fangled technology? (264).

It is also a postmodern absurdity for Nkhoma, a world-class journalist who is read by millions of people in his country to live without friends. This situation which makes it difficult to share his worries since he has only mere acquaintances as “colleagues in the same profession, the club members or bar hoppers he rubbed elbows with in the hotels, motels, or inns” (265, 266). The plan by the Harrises to entertain Nkhoma with video shots of their last lake Tamanda trip is also a postmodern act because of its technological dimension and its artistic bent, as the video show is intended as a preview for the Yandama trip (264, 265). It should be noted how Nkhoma refers to this gesture by the Harrises as well-meaning but misplaced enthusiasms as he is trying hard to avoid being “accidentalised”, a term that reminds one of the deadly nature of the Banda days, but which is symbolic for the post-Banda times because people are still being hunted down for seeking to find the truth. A postmodernist expression is used when Gondwe, in response to Tiyese Gonani's question at the MAG meeting on why another monument should be erected for the Maravi victims, says that the Maravi disaster is “obscurely commemorated” (227). The monument is only a notice on metal plaque which stands behind the towering Victoria Memorial Tower at Gombe Bay. This is a clear case of arts and the politics of representation. What is not valued is not granted spatial and temporal significance.

Nkhoma's investigation which began as a personal quest for the truth soon assumes enormous political and historical importance, sucking in both public and individual actions in its inquiry such that Nkhoma, himself, is not left out. The Maravi story is seen to have the transformative power to expose the hidden nature of those it touches. Nkhoma, for instance, tells Chikondi that the Maravi story is asking everyone to look into themselves. Perhaps, that is why he wonders why he should report on others when he, himself, is not clean (556). The fact that everyone is angling for the truth commission on the Maravi disaster is symbolic in the sense that for a country like Malawi to be healed of its past wounds, everyone – both the leaders and the followers –

needs to come clean with their past actions. Nkhoma cheats on his wife, Susan flirts with men, Thoko has not revealed to her husband what transpired in the dancing camps during the days of Banda and Mwale is running away because he cannot face the truth about his father's involvement in the Maravi saga. With the Maravi phenomenon, the private-public dialectics is blurred as it becomes clear that the entire societal structure is sick because of attempts to hide the truth, both at the personal and the collective levels. The author's vision, therefore, is for society to be courageous enough to confront their history – both personal and collective.

Annie Chikhwaza as a Model of Ideal Malawian Leadership in Gibson's *Mother of Malawi*

Al Gibson's *Mother of Malawi* is a biographical account of Annie Chikhwaza, a Dutch woman married to the late Lewis Chikhwaza, a Malawian politician and businessman-turned preacher whom she met in South Africa where Lewis was attending a Bible school. The 317-page book details the momentous episodes of Annie's life from her childhood days in the Netherlands, through to her first marriage to David in South Africa and then to her time in Malawi. It should be noted that the emphasis of the work's plot is Malawi, where most of the humanitarian works of Annie are dramatised. The biography begins in medias res with a most traumatic event in Annie's life in Malawi – an attempt by Lewis' children, her step children, to murder her and her husband due to disagreement arising from the ownership of Lewis' property. The five children of Lewis wanted it shared so that Annie would not rob them of the property upon their father's demise. The story then proceeds to explain how Annie got to be in Malawi by going back in time to capture Annie's childhood, adolescence and adulthood as she grows up.

Born in the Netherlands on 26th May 1944, in the town of Dronrijp, Annie (Antje Saakje Terpstra) experienced poverty, abuse and discrimination in those dark days of European history. These bleak experiences would shape Annie's later adult character, developments, perceptions and dispositions, especially when she goes to live in Apartheid South Africa and the poverty-ridden and HIV/AIDS infested Malawi. In childhood, Annie is described by Gibson (2013) as “a lively baby with beautiful blue eyes and a bountiful mop of brown hair”, stating that “it was clear from the start that

she was going to have enormous character” (20). Annie is also reported to be a born leader whose leadership qualities manifested right from childhood when she began caring for her younger brother and sister. Her passion for attending to the needs of people also began right from childhood with her setting up a pretend hospital in the attic of her parents’ house, where she cares for her “patients” – the children in the streets. This passion for suffering humanity transcended the racial, cultural and class barriers of Annie’s conservative society so that at one point, Annie’s pretend nursing graduated into actual nursing as she goes to care for the “dirty boat people” and the immigrants from Indonesia and Suriname. Gibson writes that “From a young age, she [Annie] had an understanding that all people were valuable to God, no matter who they were” (24). Annie is depicted cleaning the houses of these immigrants to the consternation and stern rebuke of her parents and neighbours because of the poignant odour that oozed from the homes of these unfortunate creatures.

Annie must have helped to clean the dirty boat people and the immigrants in her neighbourhoods but she was not able to clean them spiritually because, then, though she was from a strict Christian family that read the Bible twice daily, she did not have a personal relationship with God. Personally, she felt dirty and unworthy within partly because of her mother’s repeated phrase: “You’ll never amount to anything” and partly because she was continually abused sexually by a family friend, Jan, for two years. Annie recalls that “He [Jan] would find a corner somewhere and he would abuse me. . . He never penetrated, but the fondling was shameful enough. That’s when the abuse started, and I was not able to tell anybody about it until years later” (27). It is in the midst of these ugly life experiences that Annie receives God’s divine call to serve Him (31) in the city of Zaandam, where she is glad to go to school and put Jan behind her. However, the abuse happens again and this time from the Chaplain of St. John’s Hospital where Annie was helping to care for the sick after classes. This incident throws Annie into deep depression, causing her to stop going to school and causing her parents so much anxiety.

The freedom Annie seeks comes with an opportunity to work in a mental home in Amersfoot, many miles from home. Annie’s empathy for human suffering is deepened by her experiences in the psychiatric hospital as she is daily “surrounded by anguish,

grief, and heartache” (36). However, there is also a downside for a fifteen-year old to be so overwhelmed with human suffering. She is verbally and sexually harassed by the patients in the hospital. One calls her “dirty little prostitute” and another says that “she’s got sex appeal” (36). Though these offensive and torturing comments are made by mentally deranged people and ought to be ignored, they turn out to awaken the entirety of Annie’s abusive memories and together with the haunting statement from her mother, they made her feel so bad about herself that she began nursing thoughts of suicide. When one of her patients commits suicide, Annie is overcome with self-blame and guilt. The fact that Annie’s many attempts to take her life fails is an illustration, according to her, that God has called her and has a purpose for her to fulfil on earth. She cuts herself in many places so as to bleed to death, breaks a thermometer and swallows the mercury, as well as taking an overdose of sleeping pills (40). When she regains consciousness five days after swallowing a whole bottle of Luminal sleeping tablets, the doctor tells her: “God has a plan for your life, Annie. . . You should have died; it’s a miracle you’re alive” (41).

Yet, Annie’s hunger and thirst for death through suicide persists until the Easter of 1963 at the age of 19 when she encountered Jesus through the instrumentality of Brother Andrew’s Open Doors Ministry. Gibson recalls the dramatic moment when she accepts Jesus Christ as her personal Lord and Saviour:

Annie jumped out of her chair in excitement and ran to the front. It was the most amazing experience of her life. She felt embraced by God’s love and was instantly set free from any impulses towards suicide. All thoughts of self-harming also disappeared and her mind was completely at rest (42, 43).

This was a significant turning point in Annie’s life as she experiences the joys and inner peace that come with soul salvation. She becomes a fervent evangelist, giving both herself and her substance to the work of God even in the stern rebuke from her mother who does not appreciate her wearing old clothes and denying of herself by giving all her money to the Open Doors Ministry. At the age 21 Annie leaves for the United Kingdom where she intends to attend the Bible College of Wales in Swansea. The linguistic reality in the UK requires that she should take a job as an au pair with a family in order to achieve the linguistic mastery she needs to function well at the Bible

school. It is in the course of this informal training that Annie meets her future husband, David, at the time a Director of General Motors Finance Corporation, a man ten years older than Annie.

With her hasty marriage to David in March 1966, Annie could not continue with her Bible school dream, as David got transferred to South Africa. The marriage soon proved to be a mistake. Of course, the signs were there from the beginning, though Annie, “young and in love and full of hopes and dreams”, failed to notice them (55). The truth is that though David and Annie looked great as a couple on the surface, they were incompatible on many counts. David did not have the same level of spiritual passion and compassion for the suffering humanity as Annie and this turned out to be a point of major disagreement between the couple on many occasions. Yet Annie endured the marriage until there was no reason to keep the union going and by October 1983 when the marriage ended through a divorce filed by David, Annie had suffered verbal and physical abuses, forced abortion, unfaithfulness, physical and emotional abuse of her children. Annie’s heroic dimension could be seen in her holding on tenaciously to her faith and continuing to evangelise in Apartheid-torn South Africa despite the obvious lack of support from her husband and the threats and intimidation from the authorities. All her life, Annie is known to battle with her antagonists, physical, spiritual and psychological, refusing to give in to them, whether they are her parents and neighbours trying to stop her from cleaning the houses of dirty immigrants, her Malawian in-laws trying to end her life for bringing succour to the suffering Malawian women and children, or thoughts of suicide and guilt.

Gibson’s *Mother of Malawi* is a post-Banda publication because apart from coming out of the press in 2013, the part of the story that relates to Malawi begins in 1993 when Annie and Lewis got married in Blantyre. By this time in Malawian history, the Banda regime was already on the verge of collapse following the 1992 Lenten pastoral letter read in parishes across Malawi, which provoked widespread protests against the Banda regime. By June the following year, the Malawian people would vote unanimously in favour of multiparty democratic system with over 64 percent of the votes in a historic referendum. By 17th May 1994, Banda would be unanimously voted out of power after nearly 30 years of dictatorial rule. It is interesting to report that another Lenten pastoral

letter was issued on the 29th of April 2018, twenty-six years after the 1992 letter, decrying the fact that 54 years after independence, the peoples of Malawi still languish in extreme poverty while a few privileged men of power enjoy expansive wealth at the expense of the majority (*NyasaTimes*, 2018: Par2). The letter also laments the fact that the hard-won democracy has not yielded the fruits the people anticipated (Par1). This is an illustration of the post-Banda disillusionment which is expressed in terms of the disappointment felt by the people for having their hopes and great expectations dashed by the same leaders who promised to depart from the old ways of doing things but who turn out to follow in the footsteps of the old leader, albeit in subtler ways.

The reified and reordered postcolonial argument in the biography is seen in the observations made by Annie on the contemporary state of Africa. She decries the United Nations' attitude towards Africa in which Africa is perceived as a dumping ground for aids and grants when Africa is blessed with huge mineral deposits and other resources such as gold, platinum, diamond, oil, wildlife, among others. Annie, however, believes that God's intervention is what Africa needs for its situation to be turned around. Yet the thesis in this study is that Africa's leadership is the major factor in Africa's underdevelopment, as Annie's story directly and indirectly reveals. The leadership failure in Malawi is depicted both at the local and national levels. An interesting instance is the characteristic indifference shown by the traditional chief of Bvumbe and the Member of Parliament for the area towards Annie's plight and complaints during the deadly confrontation Annie and her husband had with her stepchildren and in-laws (*Mother of Malawi*, 150). The same tone of indifference and characteristic aloofness is observed when Annie informs the then President, Bakili Muluzi, about the demolition of the nursery school she had started for the poor children of Malawi as well as the threats and intimidation by her stepchildren and in-laws:

“They are threatening to kill my husband and me,” Annie insisted.

“But they are only threats,” he [the President] replied.

“Yes, but they are serious threats!”

“What evidence can I give the Inspector General?” the President asked. “There is nothing I can do until something has actually happened” (154).

Perhaps, coming to the realisation that Malawian leadership constitutes an important catalyst in the process of lifting the country out of poverty, moral corruption, and achieving political and economic stability, Annie establishes the Kondanani with a vision to providing an institutional leadership for other orphanages to follow. In the words of Annie, “We may not be able to solve every problem . . . but by bringing up a new generation of leaders we can make a positive contribution to the future of Africa” (285). Annie, herself, is a born leader – one who leads by example. She is a sharp contrast to the Malawian political leadership. Through her personal contributions and the sacrifices she has made in an attempt to alleviate the hurts, pains and sufferings of Malawi’s poor, she has shown herself to be a leadership force worthy of emulation by contemporary Malawian leadership and she has earned herself the name Mother of Malawi, which is a title of a Dutch TV documentary, “Mem in Malawi”, in 2008 (295). In a bleak leadership valley like Malawi, Annie shines the light of leadership exemplification. Annie’s kind of leadership is what Malawi, and indeed Africa, needs in order to develop. It is worthy of note that in running the orphanages, she does not take a salary but has to survive by other means. She is equally commended by the external auditing firm for keeping an excellent account of the orphanage (263). This is in sharp contrast to most African leaders who look at the State fund as their personal money to be spent at every whim without recourse to accountability. Yet, these are funds donated to these African countries through aids and grants by relevant bodies and organisations around the world, the same way Annie sources for funds from individuals and corporate bodies around the globe.

The educated/uneducated dialectics in the story could be seen in Annie’s recognition of the need for Lewis’ grandchildren to be given proper education. She takes it upon herself to teach these children and also finance their education. Having recognised the desperate educational needs of Malawian children, Annie builds the Kondanani Nursery School, a world-class educational facility, which was officially opened by the then President of Malawi, Bakili Muluzi. The hate-spiced ignorance of Annie’s in-laws, stepchildren and the villagers, however, prompts them to demolish the nursery school in the heat of the conflict over family property between Lewis and his children. This action brings about a sudden disruption in the education of these children. It is only a

society that does not value education that will look on in conspiratorial silence while some of its citizens wreak havoc on educational facilities

Annie observes that none of the perpetrators of the heinous act has been made to face justice. It is to Annie's tenacity as a leader that the Kondanani has been rebuilt and expanded to include a primary school and a high school in November 1998. Annie's orphanage is so successful that even the Malawian Department of Social Welfare brings children to Kondanani. The success of Kondanani is also attested to by the high-profile adoption cases recorded in Kondanani, including Madonna's adoption of Baby Mercy. Gibson writes that over twenty adoptions have been arranged in Kondanani as at 2011 and that children from Kondanani currently are living with their adoptive families in many parts of the world, including Holland and Australia (209). It is interesting to note that these children are rescued from the jaws of death, given an education and placed on the world stage, thanks to the leadership vision of Annie Chikwaza.

Postmodernist Features in *Mother of Malawi*

A number of postmodern characteristics can be identified in *Mother of Malawi*. Postmodernist antithetical expression is noted when Annie says, "We had nothing, but we had everything!" (98), in a bid to explain how God always provides for her and the children in miraculous ways. This postmodern logicality can be found in most of Annie's expressions. One such expression is: "God can take a minus and turn it into a plus" (177), an exemplification of God's mathematics, according to Annie. This statement is inspired by the action of Annie's gardener who duplicated Annie's example of building a school and caring for orphans after Annie was attacked and airlifted to South Africa for medical attention. The gardener now boasts of three schools, a development that prompts Annie's postmodern logical expressions: ". . . one school had to die for three more to be raised up" (177). When Annie is faced with financial challenges during the opening of the orphanage for children whose parents died of AIDS, she tells the Kondanani trustees: ". . . one thing I know about God is that money follows ministry, not the other way round" (190).

Postmodern euphemism is exemplified in Gibson's creative description of the death of HIV-infected babies in the orphanage when he states, "Annie and her team are moved

to tears when babies pass from their arms into those of Jesus, but they are sure that they have gone to a better place” (213). There is also the postmodern/magic realism captured in Annie’s belief that “witchcraft is common in African countries” and so she “is quick to counter any curses that may have been uttered over the children, praying for them in the name of Jesus” (249). In addition, where a child has been given an inappropriate name, the child is given a new and better name. Postmodern illustration of the conflict between appearance and reality is seen in Annie’s initial refusal to let in three seemingly shabbily dressed men into her property following the influx of people in the wake of Lewis’ demise. It is only after Annie is told that the men are from the Malawian Presidency that she relents and allows them in. According to Annie, she learnt a great lesson that day not to judge people based on their appearance, as she nearly committed a costly mistake of turning away the President’s aides (257).

Postmodern irony is depicted in the revelation by Annie during the auditing of kondanani that the orphanage pays tithes. Most orphanages are known for receiving gifts, but Kondanani turns out to be an orphanage that does not only receive, but also gives. It is a mark of postmodern irony and contradiction that in the biography, Lewis, Annie’s husband, is described as a friend of the late dictator, Banda. Gibson writes of Lewis shortly after his demise: “He was a leader Malawi could look up to: a politician at one time and an MP and friend of Malawi’s long-standing President, the late Hastings Banda. . .” (254). This goes a long way to explaining the covert rendition or creative silencing of political tensions in *Mother of Malawi* in spite of the fact that Annie arrived in Malawi and married Lewis at a time when political tension was at its peak following mass protests to oust the dictator. Writing about Banda would have offended the friendship sensibilities between Lewis and the dictator. There is also a dose of character structured intertextuality. For instance, Annie’s ex-husband, David, could be compared with Eugene in Adichie’s *Purple Hibiscus* because David, like Eugene, does not consider himself to be abusive in anyway (90).

Dark humour abounds in *Mother of Malawi*. As Annie seeks God’s face after being proposed to by Lewis, she says to God in her prayers: “He’s a man of impeccable character and vast wisdom. . . . And he’s a very loving man, but do you have any idea how hard up he is?” (117). In this, Annie makes light of the shocking Malawian

poverty which also rubs off on her husband, Lewis. Thus, when she is leaving South Africa for Malawi, she finds it hard to leave any item behind even though it is practically impossible to carry all of them. Putting the matter lightly, Annie says: “I realised that although it had been easy in the past to sing the song ‘I surrender all’, I now found myself in a situation where I could not even surrender a piece of furniture” (120). When the officiating pastor at Annie and Lewis’ wedding refuses to preach because of the driver’s lateness, Annie says that she has yet to hear of anyone in Malawi being exactly on time and thus, she is not pleased with the pastor! (122). Annie also makes light the sordid conditions in her new home. The truth is that the Lewis’ house Annie comes to meet lies in ruins, but she laughs everything off though she is determined to adapt and eventually turn the place into a haven. It is sadly humorous the description of the bathtub experience by Annie: “I lay there in that old bathtub, surrounded by broken milk cans, old tyres, bags of cement, and all sorts of rubbish, and I laughed and laughed and laughed! And I asked the Lord, ‘Father, how did you ever get me out of my tiled bathroom in Bryanston into this?’” (124).

At the height of the conflict between Lewis and his children which threatens the life of Annie, Lewis and Annie go to the police station to request their intervention in the situation. The response of the station commander is sadly humorous. He tells Lewis: “If you’d married one of us, you wouldn’t have this problem!” (147). Humour is also seen in how the police arrive on a bicycle to rescue Annie after she had been beaten and maimed by the mob (161). Annie sees the arrival of the two policemen on bicycle as an act of God to save her life at that critical moment, but she couldn’t help but wonder how two ill-armed policemen could have been able to disperse a crowd of two hundred people armed with sticks, stones and pangas. Annie recalls that there was no police siren, “although she later wondered if they had rung their bicycle bells!” (161). Annie goes on to tell her tragic story laced with humour. For instance, after the attack she says she was first taken to the Agricultural Research Centre, apparently the best facility nearby, where she was sewn up like a Sunday roast chicken, she says amidst laughter (162).

The analysis in this chapter has attempted to deepen the appreciation of the postcolonialist dimensions of the primary texts in relation to the concept of post-

Bandatism. It has also tried to emphasise the postmodernist texture of the texts as well as attempting an explication on some of the residual structures of the postcolonialist framework. The next chapter of the study provides the summary, conclusions and recommendations for the research.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

“I believe that we have reached a stage in life in the economic development of Africa where moving forward is perilous, moving backwards is cowardice and standing still is suicidal. But we must persevere because winners do not quit and quitters never win.”

- **Patrick L. O. Lumumba**

Summary

This research has attempted to engage the ongoing conversations on how to reposition Africa ideologically in order to drive its development agenda in the 21st century. The study identifies African leadership as an indispensable factor in Africa’s development. However, the current state of leadership, as available indices indicate, is a far cry from the ideal. This, therefore, necessitates the intense interrogation of African leadership as a means of drawing attention to the leadership vacuum in the continent, as well as a way to bring about leadership consciousness in the people and also conscientisation of Africa’s current leaders. A major weakness of the postcolonial theory is its predilection with the West and Western colonisation. This is in light of emerging realities in Africa showing that the colonial narrative no longer serves and should be repressed in the collective unconscious of Africa’s history. The implication for such repression is that colonialism could still be active in motivating the actions of leaders and followership on the continent but from the background and not consciously. Socio-political occurrences around the world, together with their socio-economic implications, justify the idea that Africa should rethink its development strategies. With Brexit in the UK, re-Nationalism and the rise of the Far-right Movement in the EU and the America-first philosophy of Trump in the US, the Third World, and indeed, Africa, is suddenly left in the cold. Looking up to the West for grants, aids and loans has not helped Africa and will never be of help. Neither does fleeing or escaping Africa’s provincialism to the Cosmopolitanism of the First World can do Africa and Africans any good. Already the anti-immigration stance in Europe and America has questioned the ideals of

transnationalism and multiculturalism which could have provided Africa's escape from the social, political and economic limits of postcolonialism.

This research maintains that Africa has the resources, human and material, to compete with Europe and America in the long run. What hold Africa back are a galvanising ideology and people with the right leadership values. Africa is in dire need of a “practical philosophy” – one that directly touches on the sore spots of Africa's existence. Using the existing Africa-conscious ideologies as a springboard, this research has proposed a reordering of the binary structures of postcolonialism to create a leadership-conscious and leader-critical hermeneutics in African literary criticism. This is based on the assumption that it is the paucity of credible and people-conscious leadership that is keeping Africa from taking its rightful place at the global stage. The theory, a product of critiquing the major weaknesses or problematics of the postcolonial theory through the self-reinventing instrumentality of New Historicism, proceeds by jettisoning the colonial narrative from Africa's postcolonial criticism and replacing same with African leadership as Self or the Dominant Self. This is then positioned against African Followership and the many oppressed structures that constitute the Followership. It must be noted that this critical gesture does not in any way result in a neocolonial critique since colonialism has already been poetically suspended. Of course, the neocolonial would still point towards the colonial – a discourse which is assumed in this study as no longer matching Africa's contemporary realities.

A critique of any postcolonial African literary text from the new postcolonialist perspective aims at identifying how leadership functions in the text. This opens up whole new interpretive possibilities in contemporary reading of African works as such oppressed structures like men/women, adults/children, rich/poor, among others, which could be interrogated against the nature of leadership in the text. If Africans, both at home and in the Diaspora, could “return” to Africa (text) and interrogate African leadership, this study believes that the much-needed consciousness and conscientisation for the repositioning of African leadership will be achieved.

In this inquest, Malawi, a Southeast African country which only in 1994 emerged from a three decade-long dictatorship of Dr Hastings Kamuzu Banda, stands as a suitable

context for the querying of African leadership. During Banda's reign, the political, cultural and economic growth of the country was stifled and strangled through policies and actions predicated on intolerance of differing opinions and perpetration of power. These experiences have survived in Malawian literature, including the continual influences of the Banda regime in the new dispensation – a phenomenon that has been tagged “post-Bandaism”. Thus, this research selects for study seven prose works from Malawian literature mostly through judgmental sampling method. These texts are also tagged “postmodern” based on the fact that their publication dates fall within the assumed dates and aesthetic qualities correlate with those of postmodernism.

The method of textual selection takes into consideration the rich body of expatriate literature on Malawi. Thus, both Malawian writers and works of non-Malawian writers who write about Malawi are selected. The idea is to see whether two sets of writers share commonalities in sensibilities regarding the postcolonial issues in Malawi. The selection also attempts to represent most of the sub-prose genres. Hence, the selection cuts across novels, novella, biography, memoir and short stories. The seven primary data sources selected for the study are: Mapanje's *And Crocodiles Are Hungry at Night* (memoir), Theroux's *The Lower River* (novel), Zeleza's *Smouldering Charcoal* (novel), Mnthali's *Yoranivyoto* (novella), Chimombo's *Hyena Wears Darkness* (short story), Chimombo's *The Wrath of Napolo* (novel) and Gibson's *Mother of Malawi* (biography). These texts are subjected to literary analysis in a bid to interrogate Malawian leadership against the various oppressed structures detained in them. Since the texts are also assumed to be postmodern works, attempts are also made to account for the postmodernist features contained in them in order to bring out the critical and stylistic interface between postcolonialism and postmodernism.

Furthermore, recognition has also been given to the need for the critic to be armed with history in any critical enterprise on Africa's postcolonial situation. Thus, the New Historicist approach has been deployed in the research and the critical analytical tool of historicity has also been used in determining the historical actuality of the human experiences detained in the selected primary data sources. Utilising the self-reinventing mechanics of New Historicism, the researcher has also reconceptualised the framework of postcolonialism to direct the analysis of the research concepts which have been

placed on binary structures designated as “oppressed structures” and which are interrogated against the background of leadership dominance. The review of related literature, which has a tripartite structure, critically comments on existing works on Malawian history and politics from the perspectives of a reified and repositioned postcolonialism. It also reviews available sources on historicity, postmodernism and post-postmodernism. The third part of the review takes stock of the developments in Malawian literature and criticism using a panoramic survey approach. The outcomes of the review include the justification of the imperative to continually interrogate Malawian leadership in literature, which forms the major and general objective of this research; the continual relevance of history/historicity in the discoursing of Africa’s postcolonial condition. The need to generate critical materials on Malawian literature and the need to have them available in the researcher’s milieu since there are points of convergence between Malawian and Nigerian literature, though the scope of determining the current study precludes an in-depth investigation of such connections.

In the analysis of the rich/poor binary structure, the research yields the understanding that extreme poverty that persists in Malawi, as dramatised in Theroux’s *The Lower River* is not unconnected with the nature of leadership in the society. This is also evident in Mapanje’s *And Crocodiles Are Hungry at Night*. This idea reinforces the concept of leadership determinism in any human society. The dictatorial rule of Banda impacted negatively on the welfare and wellbeing of Malawians, as could be seen in the impoverished conditions of the people. Thus, it can be seen that leadership poverty invariably results in the impoverishment of the people. This implies that when there is dearth in ideal leadership values, the consequences are felt by the generality of the people. From the analysis in chapter four which is based on the men/women and adults/children binary structures, the analysis reveals how the political disposition of the Banda regime subordinates women and traumatises the children through the maintenance of patriarchal structures that devalue the female gender. It also exposes policy directions that impact negatively on the wellbeing of the children, as portrayed in Zeleza’s *Smouldering Charcoal*, Mnthali’s *Yoranivyoto* and Chimombo’s *Hyena Wears Darkness*. The depiction of women’s dancing, the hunger, the diseases and the death that plague the children characters in the works are all attributed to the unconscionable leadership portrayed in the works.

In the fifth chapter, the analysis is indicative of the enduring legacies of bad leadership as can be deduced in the carryover effects of the Banda regime into the new dispensation of democracy and multiparty system. The leadership in the post-Banda Malawi is not, in fact, different from the former leader in ideologies and values. This is especially because most of them held key leadership posts in the Banda regime. It would appear that a clean break from the past can only be attained through an honest process of reconciliation and reparation both at the personal and societal levels. All these are dramatised in Chimombo's *The Wrath of Napolo* and Gibson's *Mother of Malawi*, with the latter providing a model of how an ideal Malawian leadership should look like in the character of Annie Chikhwaza, whose leadership qualities include self-sacrifice, integrity, moral uprightness and accountability – qualities that she brings to bear in the running of the world-class orphanage, Kondanani. This is the kind of leader that Malawi requires but which at the moment remains a utopia to Malawian political leadership. It is, however, a longheld hope that a continuous interrogation of Malawian, and indeed African leadership in literature, will eventually create the desired leadership consciousness required to positively alter the social and economic realities in Malawi and Africa. The textual analysis from the postmodernist angle yields story-flavouring stylistic ingredients such as dark humour, euphemism, irony, paradox and progressive absurdism, among others, in varying degrees of abundance in the selected primary texts. They help to reinforce the aesthetic/stylistic import of the stories told in the texts.

Conclusions

This research has studied seven Malawian prose texts from the rearranged binaries of the postcolonial theory. Based on the findings of the research, the following conclusions are drawn. First is the fact of leadership determinism in the Malawian society as illustrated in the primary data sources. The centrality of leadership as a factor in deciding the destiny of any society also applies to the Malawian context, where important development indices are seen to be affected by the disposition of that country's leaderships. This is evident not only in a dictatorship, but also in a democracy. The implication of this realisation is that there should be collective, intensified, systematic and continuous efforts in the interrogation of leadership, not only in Malawi, but also in Africa, in view of leadership's centrality to development

and with a view to revitalising it for that central role. The second point in the research inference is that the postcolonial realities in Malawi – the extreme poverty, the subordination of women, the marginalisation and abuse of children, the scourge of HIV/AIDS, among others, can hardly be linked to the residual Western colonial influences; a point that unsettles and questions the postcolonial framework's predilection with Europe or the Centre. The reality as gleaned from the findings is the emergence of Malawian leadership as the new dominant Self, whose actions and inactions should be held to account in the collective ruination of the Malawian society. Through this, the relevance of the postcolonial framework as repositioned in this research and whose argument has influenced the analysis of the research is justified.

The continual relevance of history to Africa's postcolonial discourse is equally emphasised in this study. This is because African leadership, as can be exemplified in the Malawian context, is also interested in the appropriation and expropriation of history. The importance of persisting in the critical utilisation of history in literary criticism is also to push back the encroachment of the rising phenomenon which this researcher tags "postcolonial formalism". Although the selected primary texts yield abundant postmodernist features such as dark humour, literary allusion and progressive absurdism, among others, the core post-postmodern features still remain to be investigated in contemporary African literary works. Indeed, this opens up an interesting area of research for further studies. The application of the new postcolonialist framework to other literary texts of other countries in Africa is another research possibility opened up by this study. It would be interesting to watch how this whole new discourse in Africa's postcolonial criticism unfolds.

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