

Post-Postcolonialism As *De-Neocolonialism* In Chinua Achebe's *Anthills Of The Savannah* And Jack Mapanje's *And Crocodiles Are Hungry At Night*

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Abstract

In this paper, I present post-postcolonial practices as *de-neocolonialism* as represented in Chinua Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah* and Jack Mapanje's *And Crocodiles Are Hungry at Night*. Post-postcolonialism is a critical gesture that emphasises agency in Otherness, especially seen within the context of Africa's postcolonial alterity in relation to the West. The post-postcolonial argument is that African leadership has assumed selfhood and therefore can no longer be described as neo-colonial, as such assignation retains colonial agency which is assumed to have waned with the emergence of the post-postcolonial realities in Africa. Thus, *de-neocolonialism* refers to the act of riding Africa's post/postcolonial discourses of most of its neo-colonial arguments in the wake of the realisation that most African leaders have appropriated the neocolonial excuse to escape responsibility and accountability for the current socio-political maladies ravaging the continent. The analysis of the primary texts reveals that both Achebe and Mapanje have subtly infused these post-postcolonial viewpoints in their works, namely the idea that it is unrealistic to continue to hold the West responsible for most of the crises in Africa, and that until African leadership is made to accept a fair share of the blame, it will be difficult for Africa to move forward. The paper submits that part of the ongoing project at decolonising Africa should include a thought on *de-neocolonisation*, the gradual or total effacement of the neocolonial argument in Africa's postcolonial discourse.

Keywords: *Post-postcolonialism, De-neocolonialism, African leadership, Chinua Achebe, Jack Mapanje.*

Introduction

It is difficult to discuss modern African history and literature without making copious references to colonialism – that event of epic proportion said to have altered the destiny of the continent forever and forever. The truth in this assertion is quite evident in the cultural realities that confront Africans even in the 21st century in areas like language, system of education, political leadership structures and economic models. It is now known that these realities can be seen as Africa's postcoloniality, that is, the fact of being a postcolonial society marked by the unrealistic project of returning Africa to its pristine, precolonial, state. Postcoloniality then can be likened to the badge of shame worn by the heroic Knight in 'Sir Gawain and the Green Knight', which sometimes can serve prideful and glorious ends; it reminds us of the sad history of colonialism and at the same time gives us a sense of pride sharing in the Western modern culture while still being conscious of our traditional roots. This sense of cultural ambivalence is brought about by the fact that postcoloniality persists despite all attempts at decolonising Africa.

Perhaps, the foregoing explains the preponderance of colonialism in Africa's postcolonial discourse notwithstanding the number of years that has intervened between

colonialism and the independence of the post-colony. I find the celebration of colonial agency in Africa's cultural space quite disheartening, especially in the light of the fact that 'our proper bliss depends on what we blame' (Alexander Pope's *The Rape of the Lock*). Continuing to assign absolute agency to colonialism in the critique of contemporary cultural practices in Africa is like leaving the substance of a thing to pursue its shadow. For me, colonialism has assumed shadow-hood in Africa's critique space; the substance is the home-grown structures that continue to hide behind and within the fabric of colonial discourse to haunt the continent. It is time the personages of these substances be exposed so that we can become aware of the right places to direct our blame so as to secure our bliss.

A particularly imposing postcolonial concept that serves the ends of those who scapegoat the West for Africa's continuing ruination is neocolonialism. The term is akin to a double-edged sword which does no harm to any of those it pursues, as they can easily make it to turn around and attack in the opposite direction: indeed, it can at once 'sing for reggae and for blues!' (Harryson's 'Reggae Blues'). Neocolonialism provides an excuse for African leaders who have failed in their responsibilities to their nations. They are not the ones to blame, rather the blame goes to the West who had put in place structures that continually under-develop Africa despite its attainment of political independence. The West on its part reverts that it had relinquished its hold on the black continents for over half a century now and therefore bears no conceivable blame for its ruination. The blame game goes back and forth while the continent is diminished.

It is then necessary to evolve a new critical discourse if Africa must move forward. I call this discourse the post-postcolonial discourse (Eyoh Etim, 1-12; Eyoh Etim and Emmanuel Omobowale, 6-24). Post-postcolonialism centralises Africa's Otherness and sees in the new self-hood fresh and emerging Otherness whose oppressive structures are internal, no longer external. One of the outstanding structures in the post-postcolonial binary scheme is the leadership-followership dialectic, where the leadership is constituted by African leaders who set themselves against their own people – the followership. The post-postcolonial argument is that, rather than interrogate the West following from colonialism and its argument, it is the duty of the post-postcolonialist critic to interrogate African leaders against the background of most, if not all, the oppressive structures on the continent. Such structures include poverty, illiteracy, women's and children's rights, discoursed, respectively, on the rich/poor, educated/uneducated, men/women and adults/children binary schemes.

The major challenge in the discussion of post-postcolonial leadership has been that it is difficult to detach it from neocolonial leadership owing to the similarities in their approaches, as both describe African leaders that oppress their own people. However, I insist that there is a marked difference between neocolonial leadership and post-postcolonial leadership. The difference is simply that neocolonial leadership is hinged on colonial agency while post-postcolonial leadership erases colonial agency for all its worth when discussing the actions of contemporary African leaders. It sees the neocolonial argument for what it is; an excuse in the form of a false fortress where African leaders take refuge to avoid taking responsibility for all that has gone wrong in the continent under their watch. The eclipsing of colonial agency exposes a new paradigm in the critique of leadership and its structures on the continent. The attempt then to obliterate colonial agency in the discourse on African leadership is what could be termed de-neocolonialism.

Colonialism, De-colonialism, Postcolonialism, Neocolonialism, Post-postcolonialism and De-neocolonialism: A Brief Review

Colonialism was a travesty of cultural politeness and good sense, built on racial arrogance and impunity. It occurred when a group of Europeans perceived themselves as more 'enlightened', hence culturally superior to other peoples of the earth and set out with the idea of making these 'Other' people act and think like them. Of course, it is equally possible that these befuddled Europeans knew that they were wrong in their assumptions, but maybe because they had other hidden agendas, they simply decided to use cultural superiority as an excuse to exercise political authority over indigenous peoples around the world. Western colonialism has demonstrated that to rob a people from generation to generation, it is important to, first of all, rob them of their cultural identity. It is now known that the European interest in Africa has always been basically economic – whether during slavery or the 'legitimate' trade. Yet it was never necessary to state this purpose and it will never serve the interest of the current super powers to do so. Indirectness is the best policy: present yourself as a saviour to the people that you want to rob from. By the time they realise what you are up to, it is already too late for them and you would have devised a new strategy to continue the same game in the same polity. This is exactly how all predatory systems, including colonialism, work.

The missionaries, the teachers and the entire colonial administrative architecture were a metaphoric circus that 'danced' on the African cultural stage to distract Africans while their resources were looted to build Europe and give her the glorious future it enjoys to this day. This weapon was psychological, and physical, where the psychological weapon failed. Perhaps, this explains why George Nzongola-Ntalaja 'divines' colonialism 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' (53). Colonialism demonstrated the worst form of deprivation which is to take away a people's cultural identity exemplified in language imposition and other forms of identity theft like the replacement of a people's religion with a foreign one. Being so psychologically dispossessed, the colonial subjects developed ambivalence as a coping mechanism; a mental tool that helps them negotiate their new realities and relationships (Homi Bhabha, 121-130). With time, this love-hate relationship will develop into the Crusoe-Friday phenomenon (Daniel Defoe, 166, 167), whereby the colonised come to love and identify with the culture of the coloniser.

Ambivalence is a pejorative term that explains why nationalists protested against colonial rule while holding on to colonial values. It best captures the half-hearted attempts to Africanise the church while retaining its basic teachings on a sole foreign saviour of the world (the white Jesus Christ) and his teachings on humility, weird forgiveness principles and abhorring materialism. Eventually, when colonialism imploded like every system built on an ill-conceived foundation of impunity and arrogance, ambivalence best defined the new relationship between erstwhile colonisers and the formerly colonised. Thus, the decolonisation project which began with the physical eviction of Western colonialists was bound to meet its aporia when it clashed with the force of ambivalence, especially as reflected in the attitudes of the new African noble class – the leaders – and how they treated their followers. Africans had gained independence and were being ruled by their own race, yet the system was still being run with overbearing colonial principles and ideologies, thus bringing about a situation where there was change without anything changing.

Neocolonial African leaders were still receiving instructions from Europe on how to administer Africa, a space still run with colonial laws and structures. It appears that the push

for de-colonisation failed at the level of ideology, as it was only able to help us retrieve the fragments of our lost selves in the form of language spoken when we do not need English, traditional songs when we leave the church territory and tales to comfort our souls that we have not totally embraced English literature and culture (Chinweizu et al, 21-40). In the realm of power and ideology – remember that these things rule the world – we could not devise a set of ideas that could have radically transformed our lives and our societies. This is where postcoloniality comes in; a term used to explain the irreversible damage that colonialism has done on Africa's body politic and from whose pestilence there is hardly any remedy. This is where we are ideologically in our postcolonial journey; a state of helplessness and hopelessness.

Whenever realities in African society are discussed, a sense of helplessness permeates the discourse because of the haunting presence of colonial agency, which the brilliant power players on the continent have since seen as a tool of appropriation to escape scrutiny. It is important for us to theorise ourselves out of this ideological trap that infers hopelessness and despair for the continent. In doing this, it is instructive to pay attention to the following words by Sil Narasingha:

For a time . . . postcolonial scholarship thrived but now it must rearm or disarm itself to combat, comprehend or cop out of the contemporary globalised, deterritorialised and denationalised world that is under the thrall of a mega nation state, the single arbiter of its Europe (27).

It is important for African ideologues to keep in mind that colonialism succeeded largely because it was driven by an ideology hinged on racial superiority and psychological engineering or reengineering of a people. To glorify that ideology by keeping it in focus and making it the basis of all future theorisations is to permanently disable our minds, lives and society. There is therefore the need to establish at once temporal and ideological distance from colonialism in the critique of leadership in Africa since it has been established that leadership is what has to change if Africa must move forward (Michael Vickers, 13). It is the critique of leadership or how leadership should be critiqued that has become an issue in Africa's postcolonial literary space. But how did we get to this point?

Some critics argue that Africa's postcolonial leadership entanglement is largely one beset with definitions and divinations. This malady is clearly identified in the work of Bill Ashcroft *et al* which defines the post-colonial 'to cover all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day' (2). Evident in this definition are two issues debated in postcolonial criticism to this day. These issues are postcolonial temporality with its marker and the object of the postcolonial critique itself. One finds in this definition the reason that colonialism continues to function with high agency in Africa's postcolonial discourse. It also creates the problem of how to understand the 'post' in the word 'postcolonial', indeed forming one of the most debatable issues in the postcolonial discourse. In the end, the 'post' in the 'postcolonial' becomes a loaded, or even an overloaded morpheme, often wrung dry by meaning hunters in search of fresh perspectives for the already dizzying scope of the postcolonial field of discourse. The postcolonial has equally become a way of looking at the continuing effects of colonialism even after the physical departure of the colonial masters who left behind structures and personages of power to maintain those structures for them while they stay in Europe and other super power spaces to manipulate these structures through international laws and institutions put in place to service their desires. This is often what is termed as neocolonialism.

There are many marks of neocolonialism. One of them is that neocolonialism denotes the perpetual dependence of the postcolony on the metropolis notwithstanding the claim of independence (Maximilian Feldner, 2). For the postcolony to remain dependent on the former colonial masters, there has to be a structure in place to foster such continuous dependence. These structures are not so easily discernible because the theatrics of independence was so convincingly put together in order to create the illusion of a change. The flags, the national anthem, the motto of the new country, all belie the secret agreements and sinister documents signed and sealed between the departing colonial masters and the new African stooges that they had handpicked and groomed as leaders. The issue of colonial taxation, as reported by Azu Ishiekwene in *The Cable* (online), raised by the former AU Ambassador to the United States, Arikana Chihombori-Quao, has both neocolonial and post-postcolonial implications. It demonstrates neocolonialism because through 'The Pact for the Continuation of Colonialism', France continues to gain economically from African labour and sweat owing to the structures she put in place before the expiration of physical colonialism. However, the complicity of African leaders in the said pact (plot) years after independence raises a post-postcolonial question, not a neocolonial one. It speaks of betrayal that has little or nothing to do with colonial dependency except the greed and insensitivity of the African leaders. Though Ishiekwene analyses Mrs Chihombori-Quao's claims as an exaggeration, the possibility that France is able to manipulate the African economy through the complicity of African leaders raises concerns because post-postcolonially speaking, it would take the galvanisation of African leadership to break these neocolonial chains. This is exactly what the Ibrahim Traore regime aims to achieve in Burkina Faso through the severing of political and economic ties with France and rearranging the economic structures of the country.

The scenario above is a demonstration that toeing the path of neocolonialism in the critique of African leadership is counter-productive. Already there are neocolonial discourses which discuss the bane of leadership in Africa with little or no emphasis on colonial agency. A good instance is observed in Obianuju Ekeocha's *Target Africa* which depicts the greed of neocolonial African leaders as exemplified in the high rate of corruption among leaders in the continent (93-95).

Neocolonialism is marked by control through presence and absence or, perhaps, '*preabsence*' – being there by not being there. It is like the wind; it is abstract or invisible but its force is always felt. Those who control through presence blame those who are absent while those who control through absence blame those who are present. Perhaps, neocolonialism is implicated in the proverbial postcolonial blame game which is put paid to by Stanley Igwe's (2010) publication, *How Africa Underdeveloped Africa*, a form of counter discourse to Frantz Fanon's *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. The post-postcolonial discourse takes off from Igwe's argument which equally echoes Achebe's assertion in *The Trouble with Nigeria* on the leadership agency in Nigeria's, and indeed, Africa's travails. However, the post-postcolonial interrogation of leadership does not emphasise colonial agency because such agency has been transformed or replaced by self-hood (Etim, 1-12). Without this understanding, leadership critique in Africa would continue to be plagued by neocolonial coloration or complexion. It is the exclusion of colonial agency from African leadership discourse that is described in this essay as de-neocolonialism.

De-neocolonialism manifests in the attempt by critics to deemphasise neocolonialism in Africa's postcolonial discourse. For instance, all the critics who advocate that African leaders, no longer the colonial masters, are culpable in Africa's current ruination are de-neocolonial critics. The de-neocolonial project has become necessary in order to provide

the much-needed direction for Africa's progress. It is not a denial of colonialism and its postcoloniality, it is rather a way of focusing on the substance and not what has become the shadow. In this analogy, the substance is our post-postcolonial realities marked by poor leadership of fellow Africans while the shadow constitutes colonialism, the colonial masters and their structures. It is a lack of priority and common sense to leave the substance to pursue the shadow.

Another analogy that can help explain de-neocolonialism is the living and the dead, where the living are the human beings who populate the earth in existential terms while the dead are ghosts. In African cosmology, the dead are important but practicalities demand that we dwell on the living while we only remember the dead when necessary. In psychoanalytic terms, the conscious and the unconscious provides us with another instance of analogy. Colonialism and its structures have become part of our collective unconscious while post-postcolonialism (the critique of leadership without colonial agency) constitutes part of our conscious mind.

De-neocolonialism is, most importantly, a critical gesture and a textual approach whereby the critic reads a text to deemphasise neocolonialism in its politics and contents. The need for this kind of reading is due to the fact that, for want of ideological posturing, most critics have assigned to neocolonialism features and elements that overshoot its meaning, thus making the term overloaded, just like postcolonialism. I believe that neocolonialism should mostly be read in terms of structures, philosophical and otherwise, which allow for continuous economic exploitation of the postcolony by the erstwhile colonial masters. Any form of interpretation which enthrones colonial agency would be neocolonial. However, this could be a misreading on many counts and this reinforces the need for the de-neocolonial critic to be vigilant when reviewing a text and the critiques of other scholars. In the subsequent paragraphs, I hope to demonstrate how the conventional reading of the primary texts – Mapanje's *And Crocodiles are Hungry at Night* and Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah* – has been neocolonial in nature when in actuality the texts could be read through de-neocolonial lenses.

De-neocolonialism in Mapanje's *And Crocodiles are Hungry at Night* and Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah*

Jack Mapanje's *And Crocodiles Are Hungry at Night* (2011) is a prison memoir which documents the author's experiences in Mikiyu prison during the regime of Dr Hastings Kamuzu Banda, who ruled Malawi, a Southeast African country, between 1964 and 1994. Mapanje was imprisoned between 1987 and 1991 towards the twilight of Banda's reign. The memoir can be read as a neocolonial text and Banda as a neocolonial African leader. There are justifiable reasons for this. One is that the British must have left its colonial structures in Malawi. The second reason is that Banda himself was trained by the British and the Americans and, in many ways, exhibited the complexions and habits of these colonial mentors. However, this paper argues that a neocolonial interpretation of *And Crocodiles Are Hungry at Night* is a misreading while also stating why a de-neocolonial study of the text has become necessary.

The chief reason for my argument is anchored on agency, whether personal or collective. The same Banda and the other nationalists who were educated and mentored by the British were the same who resisted British rule in colonial Nyasaland. This means that they, from the beginning, had their own agency. It appears that the resort to neocolonial reasoning is a form of escapism by both the intelligentsia and the political class to avoid being held accountable for whatever happens in the postcolony; the colonial masters would say that they handed over power and left while the new African leaders would claim that they

are still being manipulated by the erstwhile colonial masters. In a de-neocolonial reading, therefore, it is important to set aside the neocolonial arguments so as to give the text its post-postcolonial focus; for as the neocolonial serves as the engine-room of the postcolonial theory, so does the de-neocolonial serves as the power house of the post-postcolonial theory. Hence, a de-neocolonial reading of Mapanje's *And Crocodiles Are Hungry at Night* is predicated on the assumption that neocolonialism is a barrier to a proper understanding of the real issues in the text. Indeed, to read neocolonialism into the text is to foster endless blame, confusion and misdirection.

In *And Crocodiles Are Hungry at Night*, the de-neocolonial study begins by acknowledging that the colonial masters have left Malawi and that an African leader, a Malawian, is now at the helm of affairs. This is another level of agency, even though extant critiques have submitted that it is not enough to effect any meaningful changes in society because of its puppetry, figurative and decorative nature. I argue, however, that if the implied agency was enough to ensure the physical eviction of the colonial masters, it is enough to push or help push for other reforms in Africa, being contrived and figurative notwithstanding. Thus, this agency qualifies us and the text it finds itself to be read from the de-neocolonial perspectives.

As the new leader of his people, Kamuzu Banda had the opportunity to lead the nation in a different direction compared to how the colonial masters carried on. However, he chose to toe the dictatorial path of the colonial masters. Definitely this would make him a neocolonial leader since he oppresses his people just as the British did. What, however, does not excuse this behaviour is that he has agency independent of the British. In fact, it should be noted that throughout the secondary world depicted in *And Crocodiles Are Hungry at Night*, there is nowhere it is stated that the British commanded Banda to become dictatorial and maltreat his people.

As a memoir, Mapanje's *And Crocodiles Are Hungry at Night* not only tells the author's story, but it also incorporates the tragedy of Malawi's post-independence politics, as the country languished under the cruel dictatorship of Dr Banda. The arrest and detention of Mapanje who, until his incarceration, was a lecturer and head of the Department of English at the Chancellor College, University of Malawi, follows a series of events that highlight the intrigues and the politics of darkness that characterise post-independence dictatorship in Africa. These stories which speak to the loss of colonial agency and the assumption of a new selfhood fail to blame colonialism and its consequences for the dictatorship of Dr Banda and its detritus on one of the best minds of Chancellor College, University of Malawi, Dr Jack Mapanje.

Mapanje is arrested on a payday (Friday) at the Zomba Gymkhana Club and then driven to the University in handcuffs where he is humiliated before the University's staff and students. That Malawi is a postcolonial society is seen in the colonial relics described in the memoir on page 5; 'The bar overlooking the ex-colonial pitch at Zomba Gymkhana Club is almost deserted. . .' (*And Crocodiles*, 5). Another instance of reference to colonial history is reflected in the narrator's observation hence, 'Since the British surrendered Nyasaland Protectorate to us after the struggle for independence, this club has been well patronised by the locals. . .' (*And Crocodile*, 6). The above excerpts illustrate Malawi as a postcolony and symbolically depict not only the structures left behind by the British still being operational, but also the agency of the Malawians in taking over these structures, administering and running them by themselves and in their own ways. It is now left for postcolonial Malawians to decide what to do with these structural relics and how to manage them.

What one observes in postcolonial Malawi is not the lack of agency by the regime

but the negative application of agency. Wherever one looks, one sees the manifestations or signs of post-independence disillusionment in Banda's Malawi in the form of poverty and underdevelopment. This is indirectly couched in the narrator's description of the Malawian landscape, '... and beyond that the slums of Three Miles village with their huts flung like abandoned turtles in the hills that lead to Blantyre, Malawi's commercial capital' (*And Crocodiles*, 3). The uneven development of the country and the creation of slumps are woven into the poverty of the average Malawian. It is suggested in the memoir that even the lecturers' salary is not enough for the month it is supposed to last. This is seen in the narrator thinking of hurrying home to pay the electricity and water bills before the salary runs out (*And Crocodiles*, 5). Did the British instruct the Banda regime to underpay her academics? Were the British underpaying their academics so that Banda could replicate the same behaviour? Was it the British that instigated Dr Banda to order Dr Mapanje's arrest? On the contrary, the writer presents the British as an entity with high value for intellectuals.

At the University of Malawi, an incident occurs that highlights the de-neocolonial argument in the memoir. It is seen in the action of the police trampling the newly acquired books in Mapanje's office. It should be noted that these books were not bought by the Malawian regime but were donated by Liz Moloney of the British Council in London and Rosalind Richards of Ntchima Trust in York (*And Crocodiles*, 10.). The irony here is that the British, often implicated in the woes of the postcolony, have donated to the growth of the postcolony's education system, whereas the agents of the regime in the postcolony are, by their action of trampling the books, taking the postcolony backwards educationally. It should be noted that under the educated/uneducated binary structure of the post-postcolonial theory, the critic gradually moves away from criticising the colonial education system imposed on Africans by the West and begins to question the post-postcolonial leaders for certain inactions and actions on their part that resulted in the stagnation of the education system on the continent.

When Mapanje's mother observes how her son is maltreated by the Malawian police agents, she makes a statement that has a huge de-neocolonial import: 'I've never seen any of my children treated in this humiliating manner before, even during colonial times' (*And Crocodiles*, 12). This statement acknowledges a shift in agency when it comes to the brutalisation of Africans, and implies that the Banda regime is worse than the British and that Banda's actions are not necessarily informed or motivated by the British. On the country, the writer observes that '... Banda, his coterie and security officers have been destroying whatever written traditions the British might have left behind' (*And Crocodiles*, 19). This statement testifies to the independence of agency in the Malawian regime, as well as ingenious appropriation of power and cultural symbols in order to survive politically. The author categorically states that the Malawian regime's political methodology could not have been derived from the British in the following 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 of Banda's own creation. . .' (*And Crocodiles*, 20).

It could be argued that even if Banda had inherited a system of torture, injustice and dictatorship from the British, he, the new black president, had agency and should have changed the system for the good of his people. The idea that neocolonialism is denoted by Africans turning around to hate themselves just as the colonial masters hated them is cogent only because of the colonial agency in the clause 'just as the colonial masters hated them'. Take away the clause and it is no longer neocolonialism. This is exactly what de-neocolonialism is all about – the attempt to exclude neo-colonial agency from the

postcolonial discourses in Africa so as to uncover hidden oppressive structures on the continent. And this is what some of the events analysed so far in Mapanje's *And Crocodiles Are Hungry at Night* portray. For instance, there is hardly any connection between colonialism and the deadly work-place politics and bad blood among colleagues described in the memoir (*And Crocodiles*, 21). The act of these diabolical university workers spying on colleagues, making damaging reports to the authorities about colleagues, deliberately destroying others' reputation in order to gain advantage are some of the reasons for Mapanje's eventual arrest and detention. Mapanje, in trying to get at the root cause of his incarceration, informs the reader about the sinister activities of the College Principal, Zimani Kadzamira, especially the well-known words he had spoken against the great writer and poet in the past which included the lies that Mapanje boasted about having overseas contacts and of travelling abroad often, that he tarnishes the image of the president outside the country, that he wrote rude poems about the president and that he uses his classes for subversive political discussions (*And Crocodiles*, 21).

De-neocolonial events also play out in Chinua Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah*, which is usually discussed as a neocolonial novel. For instance, Emira Derbel describes *Anthills of the Savannah* as a neocolonial novel and goes on to state that even the author, Achebe, including the authors of her other primary sources, sees their spaces' postcolonial conditions as mainly due to the African nation's inheritance of imperialist social and economic institutions' (39, 40). Derbel's submission is equally corroborated by Fatma Kalpakh when she writes that '*Anthills of the Savannah* is mainly about neo-colonialism, which means the oppression of the indigenous people by their own politicians and elite' (117). However, I observed that Kalpakh, in her analysis, does not emphasise colonial agency, but merely mentions the oppression of the people by their leaders after independence. There is hardly a link between colonial agency and the way post-independence Kangan leaders choose to treat their people. What Kalpakh actually does is to deploy colonialism as a backdrop for the novel and as a part of African history which is not debatable, as colonialism has become an inextricable part of Africa's history.

The tragedy of post-independent Africa is best captured by Emmanuel Ngara who surmises that 'During the struggle for independence the African politician and the African writer joined hands in the campaign against colonialism and cultural imperialism, but in less than a decade of their rule many African leaders proved that they were incapable of providing adequate leadership' (113). For Ngara, therefore, one of the indices of neo-colonialism is failure of post-independence leadership often marked by the betrayal of the people who invested their hopes in these leaders. Other features of neocolonialism listed by Ngara are economic mismanagement, tribalism, corruption and other social maladies which are all portrayed in Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah*. However, Ngara, like the other analysed critics investigated, fails to establish a direct link between the colonial agency and the practices of contemporary African leaders; or at least the link is a vague one.

Derbel, Kalpakh and Ngara's works have primarily contributed to the motivation of this paper to demonstrate how colonial agency has waned in the leadership-follower relationships in Africa's post-postcolonial discourses. A de-neocolonial reading of *Anthills of the Savannah* begins with establishing that the leadership-follower gap that exists in the novel lacks colonial agency. This attitude is perceptible in the novel as the Sam-led presidency is not responsive to the needs of the people. The government is antagonistic towards the people it is meant to serve. Just like the Malawian example illustrated in *And Crocodiles Are Hungry at Night*, the Kangan (Nigerian) government is a dictatorship. At the Cabinet meeting at the beginning of the novel, all the signs of dictatorship are present and are

well illustrated in the relationship between the president, Sam, and the members of his Cabinet. The president's lack of patience and intolerance towards opposing views smack of dictatorship. Sam is insistent on not visiting the drought-stricken people of Abazon despite the courageous entreaties of the Commissioner for Information, Christopher Oriko. It is also noticed that most of the Cabinet members are scared of the president, hence they do not air their honest opinions, but rather they resort to sycophancy in order to survive politically. The novel highlights how Cabinet members fall over themselves in praising the dictatorial tendencies of the president, with some even justifying dictatorship as a system of government that the country requires (*Anthills of the Savannah*, .3).

It must be pointed out that there is no direct colonial agency in Sam's refusal to visit the Northern region of Abazon to see things for himself. By this act, he portrays himself as an insensitive leader. Colonial agency is lacking in Sam's actions because he adopts his own agency in arriving at his own decisions since if he chooses to visit Abazon, no British agent would stop him. The anti-people's disposition of Sam is seen in how he treats the Abazonian delegation that visits him at the presidential palace. Sam views the delegation as a nuisance and an attempt to invade the presidential palace and discredit his government. We would later learn that the unwholesome treatment meted out to the Abazonians is not unconnected with the fact that the region failed to support Sam's bid to become president for life. It is this same issue that has torn apart the friendship of Sam, Chris and Ikem, not discountenancing the destructive gossips of Prof Reginald Okong. Ikem, who is from Abazon, takes the blame for the failed life presidency bid by Sam, thus explaining why the president bears him and his folk a grudge. This also explains why Abazonians' complaint about drought in their region is deliberately ignored by the presidency. This is a demonstration of tribal politics and its consequences in the postcolony.

In many ways, Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah* intersects with Mapanje's *And Crocodiles Are Hungry at Night*. It should be noted that just as Sam in *Anthills of the Savannah* wants to be life president, Banda in *And Crocodiles* is depicted as a life president who arrogates to himself an array of titles, including the father and founder of the Malawian nation (*And Crocodiles*, 146). The question I would like to ask at this point is; is Britain, the colonisers of both Malawi and Nigeria, practising dictatorship? Because then it would justify why the post-independence leaders want to stay on in power through autocratic means. The United Kingdom, at least within its borders, is a highly democratic nation where issues are sorted out through debates in parliament. Why cannot the Malawian and Kangan (Nigerian) post-independence leaders lead their countries this way since they are copying from the British? Must they copy only evil from the British? These are de-neocolonial questions that expose the cracks in the neocolonial excuses in the actions of post-independence African leaders.

The disconnect between leaders and followers in *Anthills* is observed by Ikem, the Editor of the National Gazette, thus: 'It is the failure of our rulers to re-establish vital inner links with the poor and dispossessed of this country, with the bruised heart that throbs painfully at the core of the nation's being' (*Anthills*, 141). Can this kind of disconnect be established between the British leaders and their people? Other post-independence maladies outlined by Ikem in the novel are corruption among the elite, subordination to foreign powers, violence and general chaos (*Anthills*, 141). These are all symptomatic of a failed leadership. I would like to deal with the issue of foreign domination which has been rendered by most critics as a sign of neocolonialism. However, I would like to present the issue from a de-neocolonial point of view. Gayatri Spivak, among other things, explicitly states that neocolonialism emphasises economic control over territorial conquest and it is basically a

continuation of colonialism (222, 224).

In *Anthills*, the presence of the American journalist, Lou, is indicative of some form of neocolonial relations between the West and Kangan State. Lou is thus a symbol of colonial seduction of African leaders; it is seen that the president and most members of the Cabinet at the dinner party tend to pay more attention to Lou and have no squabbles digesting whatever she suggests as solutions to the nation's economic crisis. But the de-neocolonial question I would like to ask is; who invited Lou to Kangan in the first place? Apart from this, I do not see anything wrong in getting economic advice from the West. But must we accept every suggestion offered without scrutiny? For me, it is not lack of agency that problematises African leaders' liaison with the West, but rather the deliberate choice not to exercise the agency they have.

Anthills of the Savannah's neocolonial arguments experience moments of aporias from which one could insert at once both de-neocolonial and post-postcolonial points of views. As earlier explained, de-neocolonial arguments tend to favour the absence of colonial agency in the depiction of Africa's postcolonial leadership tragedy while the post-postcolonial argument questions Africa's otherness which is assumed to have attained selfhood and therefore should answer for most of, if not all, the woes that plague the continent. It can then be seen that de-neocolonialism is the engine that powers the vehicle of post-postcolonial principles.

As the conflicts in *Anthills* peak denoted by the rupture in the friendship of the trio – Sam, Chris and Ikem, Chris opts to resign after Sam has asked him to suspend Ikem following the fallout of Ikem's meeting with the Abazonian delegation at Harmony Hotel. Sam scoffs at Chris' thought of resignation, asking where Chris thinks he is, reminding him that they are 'in a backward West African State called Kangan' not Westminster or Washington DC (*Anthills*, 144). This implies that Sam knows that Westminster and Washington DC are democratic metonyms though he deliberately does not desire to make Kangan one. It is Chris' response that has a de-neocolonial and post-postcolonial import in the novel. He says, 'We wouldn't be so backward if we weren't so bent on remaining so' (*Anthills*, 144). By this statement, the birth of the post-postcolony has been acknowledged and should be ready to be interrogated for the perpetual backwardness of the continent.

The activities of Prof Reginald Okong and the Attorney-General in destroying the friendship of Sam, Chris and Ikem parallel those of Mapanje's colleagues earlier reported in *And Crocodiles*. This can be seen during the unexpected visit of the Abazonian delegation to the presidential palace. Sam locks up the Cabinet for an hour during which he confers with his trusted aides like Major Johnson Ossai (Samsonite), Prof Okong, the Commissioner for Home Affairs and the Attorney-General. Prof Okong and the Attorney-General take turns to cause further rift in the already strained relationship of the three friends. Prof Okong, for instance, tells the president that Mr Ikem Oshodi is the cause of all the problems in the Abazon saga (*Anthills*, 18). He also tells the president that if care is not taken, his two friends [Chris and Ikem] are 'capable of fomenting disaffection which will make the Rebellion look like child's play' (*Anthills*, 20). The Attorney-General comes in and seals the doom to the trio's friendship by capitalising on the doubts on the president's mind to sow further seeds of destruction. The Attorney-General tells the president that Chris and Ikem are jealous of him, giving Sam President Ngongo's advice that: 'Your greatest risk is your boyhood friends, those who grew up with you in your village. Keep them at arm's length and you will live long' (23). This is an instance of self-hatred that has no colonial agency in it but rather demonstrative of the willingness of a people to destroy one another in order to have political advantage.

In his post-suspension lecture at the University of Bassa, Ikem demonstrates post-postcolonial and de-neocolonial principles by charging workers and the union leaders to take responsibility for some of the things that have gone wrong in the country owing to their own actions or inactions (*Anthills*, 157). Ikem views the workers, including the university students, as oppressors. He calls them 'the comrades who preside over the sabotage of the nation by their unproductivity and fraud' (159). What then is noticed is that the colonial agency keeps waning when one considers the actions of Africans in contributing to the current woes of the continent. Ikem clearly states this thus: 'To blame all these things on imperialism and international capitalism as our modish radicals want us to do is, in my view, sheer cant and humbug' (159).

Both Mapanje and Achebe have demonstrated in *And Crocodiles Are Hungry at Night* and *Anthills of the Savannah*, respectively, that Africa's marginality has shifted to a more central position and therefore deserves interrogation. In Mapanje's experiences in Banda's Malawi, there was no colonial agency in anything that he went through; in fact, he relocated to the United Kingdom after he was released from prison, which is ironic because then the former empire has come to the rescue of the son of the postcolony pursued by its dictator. In discoursing the failed friendship of Sam, Ikem and Chris, as well as the failure of Sam's leadership in Kangan, Achebe portrays these events with distant colonial agency which has allowed for the centralisation of the de-neocolonial and post-postcolonial discourses in the novel. It is interesting that these fresh meanings are harvested from novels that were previously tagged and largely studied as neo-colonial novels.

Conclusion

In this essay I have attempted to demonstrate that though Mapanje's *And Crocodiles Are Hungry at Night* and Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah* have been read over time as neo-colonial or postcolonial novels, there are ruptures in the discourses of the text which have encouraged us to read them as post-postcolonial and de-neocolonial works. Drawn from the mechanics of the post-postcolonial theory, de-neocolonialism then implies the need to deemphasise colonial agency in Africa's postcolonial discourses. From the analysis done in the primary data sources, it is seen that de-neocolonialism solves the problem of studying African leadership from the post-postcolonial perspectives as it was usually confused with neocolonial leadership. It is then realised that the exclusion of colonial agency creates the necessary difference(s) between neocolonial and post-postcolonial leaderships and their interrogation. It is suggested that the application of de-neocolonial principles in the interpretation of other neocolonial texts and their leadership will yield interesting and rewarding critiques.

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